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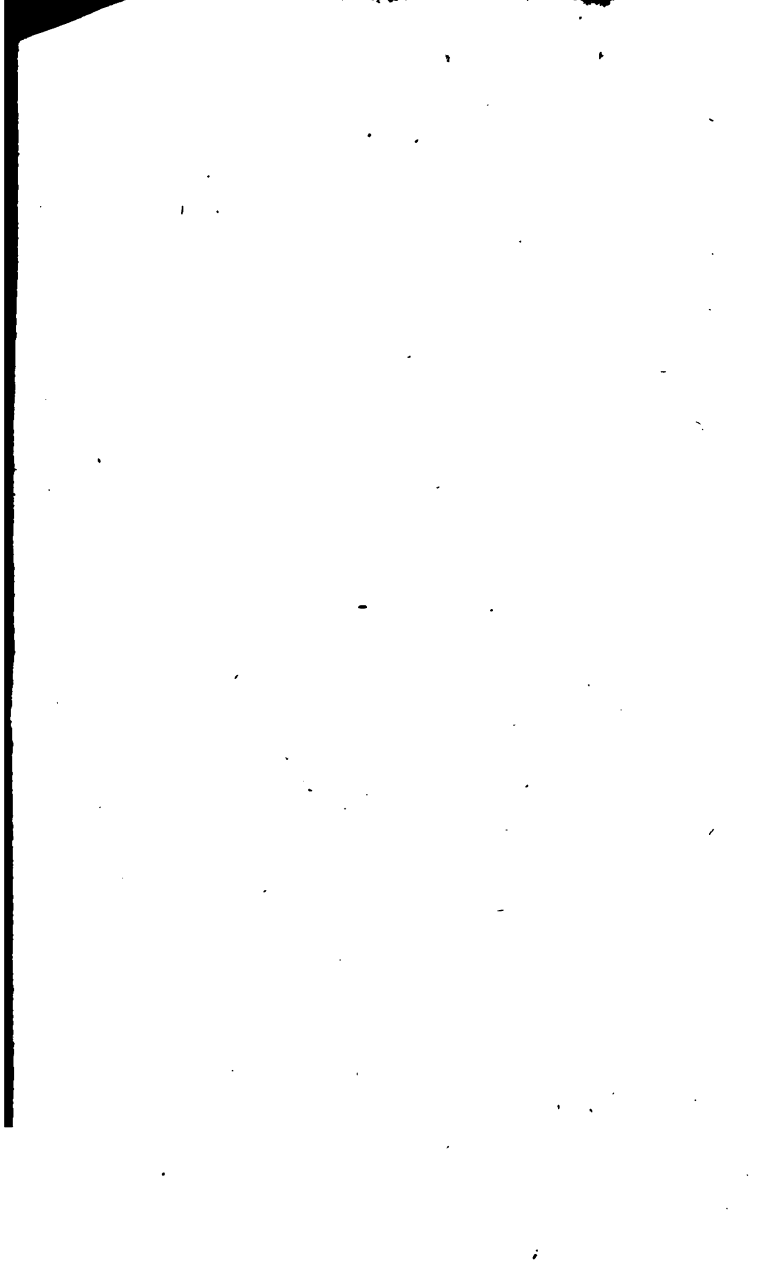
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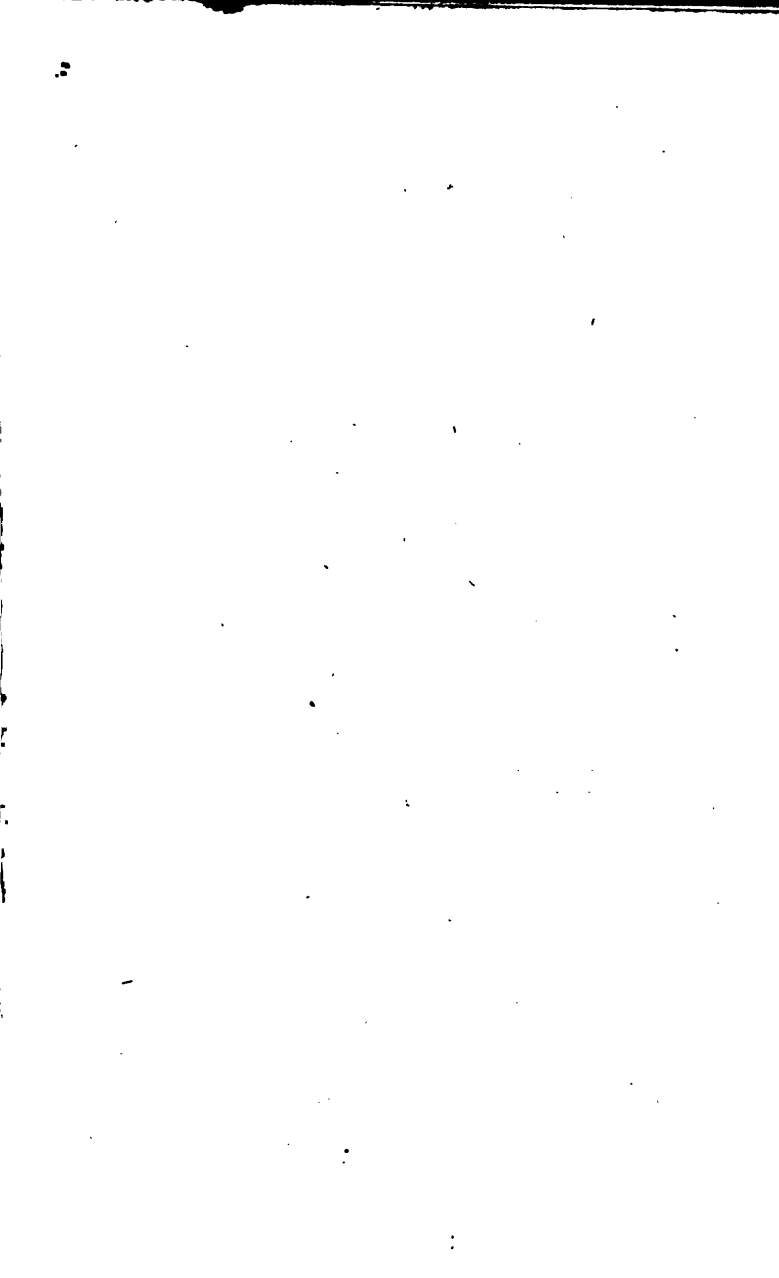
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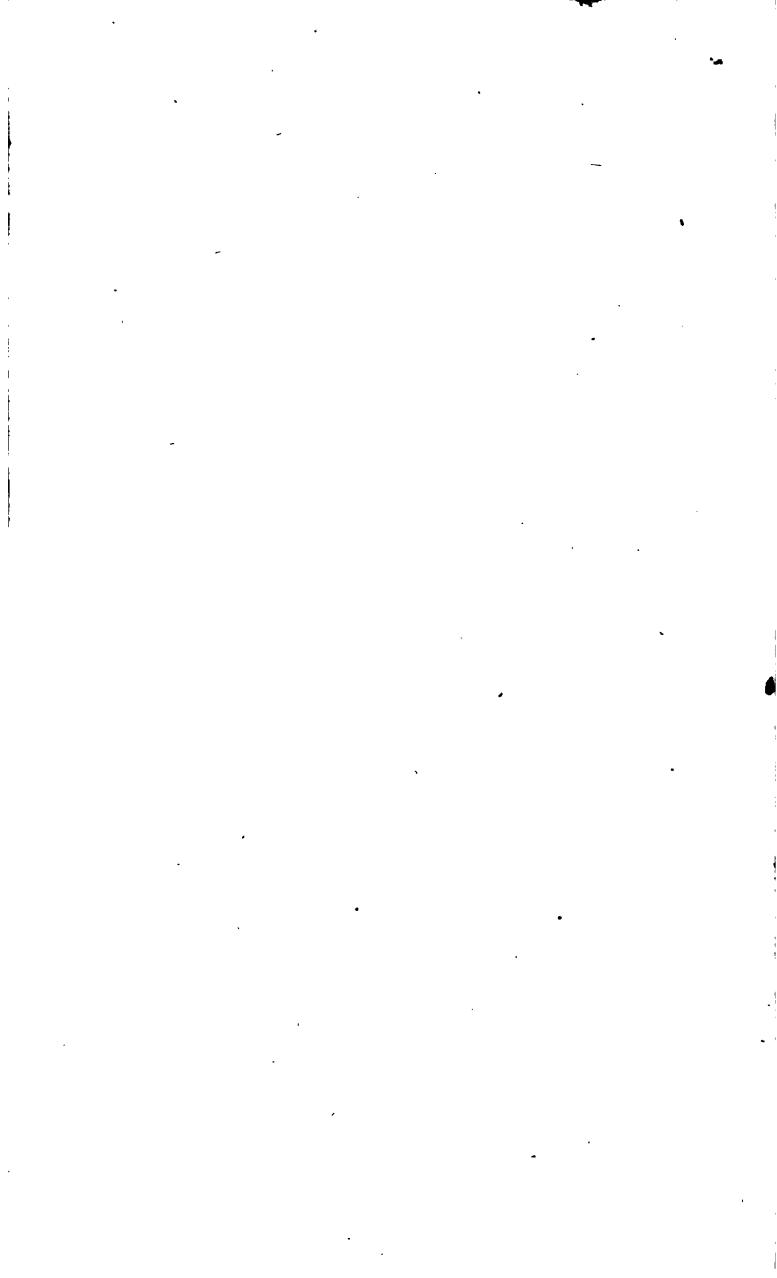
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THE
REFUSAL.

BY THE
AUTHOR OF THE "TALE OF THE TIMES,"
"INFIDEL FATHER," &c.

O, momentary grace of mortal man,
Which we more hunt for than the grace of God!
Who builds his hope in air of your fair looks,
Lives like a drunken sailor on a mast,
Ready with every nod to tumble down
Into the fatal bowels of the deep.

Shakespeare.

VOL. III.

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1810.



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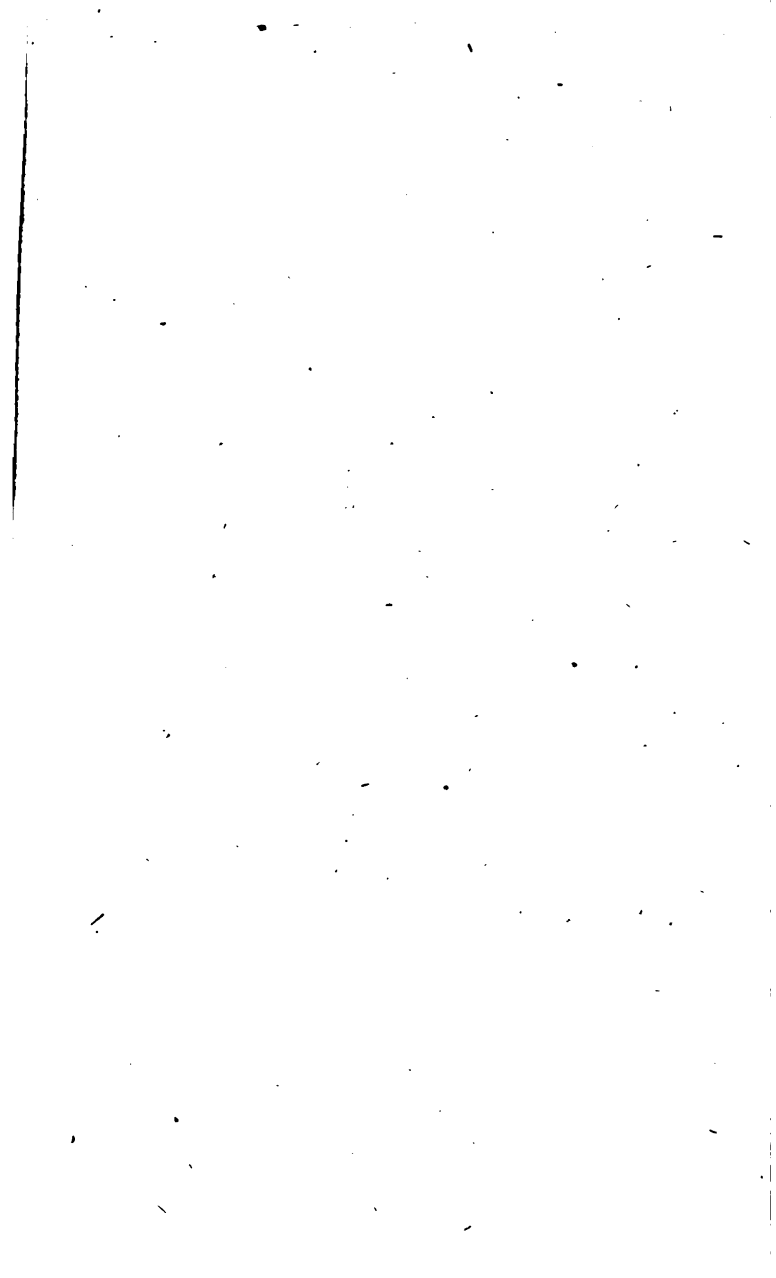
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THE
REFUSAL:

INTRODUCTORY CHAPTER,

TO THE THIRD VOLUME.

With exulting hearts
They spread their spurious treasures to the sun,
In number boundless as the blooms of spring,
Behold their glaring idols, empty shades,
By fancy gilded o'er, and then set up
For adoration.

AKENSIDE.

THE philosophists of the present
age having transferred the law of li-
berty of choice from things in which
opinion may innocently decide, to
what is in its own nature fixed and
definite, some well-disposed persons

have apprehended, not only that christianity would be superseded by some new and happier discovery, but, that the exploded superstition of heathenism would be revived. Though no one can be more sensible of the danger which is to be apprehended from the universal adoption of the maxim, that every human being is free to select his religion without hazard of present inconvenience or future responsibility, I confess I have too much dependence on the *inventive* talents of my cotemporaries to fear a reinauguration of the deities of the *Old Pantheon*. Even if force or flattery should renew the Olympic games, and era in Ionia, I am persuaded that the imitative arts would never do more than support the fascinating personages of mythology as gods of the imagination, and symbolical representatives of their peculiar attributes, where I conceive

they may lawfully remain without any hazard of corrupting our morals or bewildering our faith, at least so long as we retain sufficient judgment to distinguish acknowledged fiction from confirmed facts, and amusements from commands.

But I am not going to surrender the old woman's privilege of foreseeing evils. I also predict the introduction of an idolatry more universal than that of the court of Jove or the brutish gods of the Nile, in their best days of popularity. While self-love and vanity have such numerous votaries, we need not fear worshipping lizards and serpents, unless we consider them as emblems of deceit, nor of bowing down to any calf except a golden one. My fear is, that in a few years, the world will have as many gods and goddesses as it has inhabitants; and that we shall discover our-

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selves to be fearfully and wonderfully made, not with a view to give glory to our creator, but with such admiration of our own energies and talents, that forgetting our sister the worm and our fellow servants the angelic host, we shall soon vault from the rank of creatures into that of self-existing beings; thus, confounding mechanical skill with creative faculties, and reason with omniscience, we shall suppose, because we know and can perform much, that nothing is beyond our ability to execute.

I own that this persuasion, applied to moral purposes, and elevated by the conviction of supernatural assistance, was found amazingly stimulative by an extraordinary race of beings, who, (it is reported) were contented to endure not only poverty, pain and disgrace, but even death itself, rather than consent to do what they called a

sinful action. This obsolete phrase is so very dissimilar to unpleasant, unwholesome, unfashionable, stupid, tiresome, or any other epithet by which we express insurmountable repugnance, that I know not how to define it, and can only say, that let sin mean what it might, it was a bugbear which has happily disappeared with the other goblins and phantoms that have been dispelled by the astonishing refulgence of genius that has lately burst upon the world. Now, though the singular enthusiasts who pretended such anxiety to avoid this scare-crow, really did perform superhuman actions, and appeared not only blameless, undefiled, and actively benevolent, but were able to invert the order of nature, and dispensed temporal blessings as well as wise instructions to their auditors; they never insinuated that they were deities. On the

contrary, while they healed diseases with a touch, and suspended the active properties of the elements, they always spoke of themselves as frail, weak and mortal men, dignified only by being servants of that God from whom they professed to receive all their natural and extraordinary endowments.

In the present age we are so liberal as to pity these persecuted fanatics ; and as there seems no good ground for accusing them of being ambitious or avaricious hypocrites, we candidly suppose, that they were prevented from converting their endowments into instruments of self-aggrandisement by a perplexing sophist, named religion, who was continually telling them that all their virtues and excellencies, all their properties of mind and body, were *entrusted talents*, of which they were merely the accountable stewards ; and

that instead of being ennobled and even deified by being appointed to an extraordinary trust, this larger share of faculties imposed upon them a more fearful responsibility. Thus they trembled lest they should incur the punishment of misapplication, instead of glorying that they were wiser and better than other people.

Before these singular beings called upon the world to acknowledge the strength of meekness, the dignity of humility, and the abundance of poverty, another self-denying race of men flourished, whose existence, like the mammoth's, we are compelled to admit by discovering their visible remains. These people certainly were not destitute of a sense of their own importance, and in this they resembled the demi-gods of the present age; but then their self-regard was of a most quiescent nature, and might ra-

ther be called admiration than love. For they seemed to desire neither riches, honours, nor pleasures, which are very substantial food, but fixed their inclinations upon a gossamer sort of substance called reputation, which we now know is quite worthless, since the ablest chemists have not found it convertible into houses, lands, goods, titles, or even into routes, galas, or great dinners, though these latter articles, by proper dilation, may be spun out into this same gossamer. My dear fashionable reader, I really am serious when I tell you, that the ancients I am speaking of fought, toiled, meditated, and suffered, not for their own private emolument, but for the good of their country. Now, as the persuasion that myriads are of more importance than an individual, and that it is more desirable to make a nation prosperous than ourselves

great, is incompatible with an inordinate degree of self love, the idolatry, which I foresee could not then have been the reigning religion, or at least, such men as Phocion, Aristides, Camillus, Cincinnatus, &c. must have been notorious heretics, which was not in those times the direct road to celebrity. Nor would cotemporary historians have cast such a lustre on their heterodox conduct as still serves to reflect a temporary brightness on young statesmen and popular declaimers, who often persuade their admirers, that the souls of these worthies have transmigrated into their persons. The age which truly appreciates the value of learning, cannot be profoundly ignorant, and we must admit that it requires some general habit of disinterestedness to discover those stern and retiring virtues which scorn the

tinsel of borrowed ornament and lucrative distinctions.

I know many affirm, that virtue and vice, or as they choose to say, beneficial and hurtful qualities, are like the medium by which they act, solely of a physical nature, depending upon soil and situation, or (to grant the most to anti-materialists) created by different forms of government and modes of life. Thus they say China breeds cowardice and duplicity as naturally as a morass does rushes, and that an Arab steals and a German drinks on the same principle as a mushroom springs out of a bed of fermenting manure. It is a little unfortunate for this system of botanizing moral qualities, that Greece and Italy, the native soil of genius and glory, which gave birth to men who emulated the actions ascribed to demi-gods, while they renounced the comforts of ordi-

nary life, afterwards produced others who were the first introducers of that selfish system of idolatry which I deprecate; and not only persuaded themselves, but brought the world to acknowledge their divinity on no better pretence than that their passions were diabolically inordinate and their humours extravagantly mischievous. The characters of these self-created deities increase my apprehensions, for as men have founded their right to an apotheosis on the ground of their fiddling as well as Apollo, being as intemperate as Bacchus, as gross as Silenus, and as knavish as Mercury, what have we to expect from the prominent attributes of those who are now most clamorous in demanding a place in the modern Pantheon of immortals, either as resplendent geniuses, choice spirits, rising characters, or whatever appellative may best describe that in-

dependent mind which adopts as its motto, "Better to reign in Hell than serve in Heaven!"

I have been led into these reflections by observing what universal currency is given to the phrase "The divinity of talent;" and this not merely in poetry, where hyperbole is allowable, but in those sober compositions, in which these exaggerations look as awkward as a foil embroidery upon a linsey-woolsey petticoat. Some of my friends, to divert the spleen which this idolatrous appellation constantly excites, call my attention to the self-denying benevolence of those who are so anxious to maintain this doctrine, observing, that if I read their compositions with attention, I must be convinced that they renounce all claim to the advantages of their system, by publishing a certificate of their own incapacity to be deified, which must remain

valid till their labours are removed from the back warehouse of their publishers, and again submitted to the regenerating mill of the paper-maker. But, though I allow very little divinity either in a theological or classical sense, is to be found in these formularies of modern paganism, I am by no means sure that the authors of them are totally destitute of the buoyant spirit of vanity derived from that accursed fruit which first inflamed the human intellect with false conceptions of greatness. The consecrating unction which they bestow on works of the same standard with their own, gives us to understand, that they have no objection to receiving the same favour, and even implies a hope that they shall be anointed with the very oil of which they are so liberal to others. In the course of my life, I have seen authors who, though they

set out at first with the most self denying modesty, as they waxed warm in their literary career, grew tired of waiting for the slow return of regular payment which the trade of mutual encomium usually brings in, and therefore in their fifth or sixth pamphlet quickened the discernment of their readers by plainly telling them, that they possessed a very considerable portion of that Promethean fire which turns geniuses into gods. To say any thing derogatory of people who thus perch themselves on their pedestals in the pantheon of talent would be as mad, nay as impious, an attempt as the crime of Lycurgus, for next to a drunken Bacchanal an offended author, when "full of the god," must be considered as the most formidable of animals. Whoever, therefore, choose to say they are conscious of this latent divinity, may take as large a share of it as they think proper to claim.

If this deification of talent were confined to the sons and daughters of Phoebus, I would have held my peace, for on a moderate computation we should have only had about fifty thousand gods and goddesses, even including the subordinate genii, nymphs, fawns, and household lares, who only read manuscript travels and poems to their friends, or write journals of their own adventures. There would still have remained in England nine million nine hundred and fifty thousand men and women to burn incense in the temple of genius, and I question whether our deities would be more numerous than those of Rome, Greece, Egypt, and other enlightened nations, before the intolerant spirit of Christianity prescribed unity of worship to the great detriment of mankind. But genius is a very Proteus, and takes many other forms besides that of an

author ; and we have only to cast our eyes over the advertisements in a daily paper to recognize it alternately in the birth-day ornaments of a duchess, and the superior polish of an ingenious shoe-black, in the speeches of a peer and the puff of a quack-doctor.

Though very partial to my kinsfolk in Grub-street, I do not see why the inventor of a chymical liquid for taking stains out of table-cloths is not as great a benefactor to the public, and therefore has as much of the divine essence in him, as the fabricator of a satire, or a novel formed out of the shreds and rags of worn-out, slanders made into a fool's coat to fit some person of notoriety. I can even admit, that the mechanic who invents an engine to save lives and abridge labour, has as fair a title to immortality, as the worthy gentlemen who so laboriously employ their quills to prove

that nothing can preserve us from a political apoplexy, but allowing people to talk treason with impunity, and who thus not only discover, but administer the invigorating nostrum.

I know I go very far in the liberality of my sentiments on these points. If I were called upon to decide, whether the lame sailor who carries his shew-box at his back from fair to fair, and convinces the wondering rustics that one Englishman can knock down a score of Frenchmen by the action of his puppets, or the newspaper panegyrist of Napoleon, were the greater character, I should prefer Jack, and even insist that he had a larger portion of those virtuous energies to which the consent of ages has annexed the term god-like. And yet the eulogist always affects to found his admiration of his hero on the patronage which he affords to talents of every description; and ob-

liquely intimates that though his amor patriæ fixes him in a garret on the banks of the Thames, where his midnight lamp flames like a comet, to shew the danger and downfall of England; yet if he could but bring himself to emigrate to the pleasant borders of the Seine, the sacred effulgence of his genius would soon attract imperial attention. Now, though my John Bull prejudices make me not very anxious about preserving the breed of these *extraordinary* patriots, a wish to save a few by way of curiosity, induces me to advise, that they would not *all* fly to this mighty Mæcenas till they can take with them a large supply of the immortalizing elixir, which was promised a few years ago: or at least some boxes of the fair Princess Isabella's balsam,* which

* Vide Orlando Furioso, Canto 28.

Arriosto tells us was famous for sticking on heads after they had been decapitated. For though the munificent Napoleon is very fond of talent when it is obedient and docile, he does not take ill-manners with so much good humour as that gothic disregard of conscious merit, George the third, and as he is apt to practice a little poisoning, suffocating, and beheading, without exercising the god-like power of bringing people to life again, it will be better for them to consider ere it is too late, that though a volcano looks very bright at a distance, its crater does not afford a safe convenient residence.

The eulogiums which are bestowed on this colossal compendium of extraordinary talents, justify me in considering the French Emperor as a fair standard of what the idolaters of genius mean when they apply superla-

tive encomiums to great abilities. I have been an observer of this phenomenon ever since he laid bare the sword of slaughter and raised the banner of devastation, and I confess I discern nothing in him which merits the epithet divine. Nor can I conceive that the age would become happier, wiser, better, or nobler, if great men generally conformed to his example. I shall be accused of want of taste in preferring homely equity to the generosity of giving what is not our own ; yet I had rather want a national museum than plunder another country of its treasures. I find a charm in moderation, and a comfort in security ; and I confess I am terrified by the glorious convulsion of a political earthquake which is more likely to overwhelm my little patrimony, and despoil me of the comforts my industry has acquired, than to transplant

to my fields the standing vineyards and olive grounds of my next neighbour. It certainly may be very delightful to live in a country of poets, artists, and wits; to see marble statues instead of mile-stones; to have every sign-post decorated with the labours of modern Raphaels; and instead of meeting my own kindred, the Homespuns, to visit Sapphos, and play at chess with Solons. But while we have the example of a whole nation, whose improvement in the arts is marked by a retrograde motion in morality, where science flourishes and manners grow corrupt, I feel no anxiety for that anticipated era when universal patronage is to call forth universal talent. I grant, that in the event of every Bufo having his Bavius, I should at least give up my lodgings at Danbury and become mistress of a genteel establishment; but then my oddities would be

less attractive, and the comforts of a close carriage and service of plate would hardly compensate for the incessant labour of adulatory composition, or the vexation I should feel at seeing a clumsier eulogist promoted to a better sinecure, or retained by a less voracious patron. Much as I have sympathized in the pathetic complaint of the arts, languishing for the want of encouragement in England, or tracing these groans to their source, and considering the real pretensions of those who utter them, I have consoled myself with believing, that genius and the sciences never produce better fruit than when left to the care of liberty, independence, emulation, and honest industry. If you force the soil with superabundant manure, it will bear the parasitical creepers, slander, adulation, and servility; or such intoxicating excrescences as inflated style, un-

meaning declamation, and meretricious ornament, instead of the wholesome plants of truth, chaste invention, and useful knowledge. Need I add, that these latter productions are those which bestow immortality on the artist and the patron, and give a high tone of feeling to the nation in which they abound.

I often think that these warm advocates, who are so loud in requiring splendid patronage for the muses and the arts, and in their zeal for their remuneration, profess themselves indifferent by whom they are rewarded, or what they are required to perform, not like bravoës rather than lovers; and are more anxious to have their mistresses well paid than to preserve their reputation. No legitimate alliance ever took place between the daughters of Harmonia and Plutus; and whether they used the

"flute, the lyre, or the shell," they uniformly began their songs with an abjuration of venal influence. This indeed was unnecessary; for the least cultivated ear would tell by the sound of the harp, whether it was strung with golden wire. We all know Pegasus turned restive even under the management of Dryden and Milton, when they attempted to load the generous beast with such unwieldy rubbish, as panegyrics on the hypocritical traitor, Cromwell, or the voluptuous profligate, Charles. That keen susceptibility of whatever is great and noble, which accompanies true talent, cannot have its perceptions quickened by the arbitrary imposition of a prescribed subject, or a bribe which bids it employ falshood and flattery as the porters of invention.

If we search history we shall find, that this *affected patronage* of genius

has been the resort of those daring villains who united foresight and prudence to ambition and cruelty, and hoped to gain that reflected applause from the merit of others, which they were conscious would be denied to their own actions, when simply stated by the pen of truth. In this they shewed their wisdom: the reputation for taste and liberality has supplied the total want of other estimable qualities, and the veil which noble-minded integrity disdains to use, has concealed many a conspirator and tyrant from opprobrium. Wolsey and Louis the fourteenth,* courted and obtained literary praise by their munificence; Clarendon and Walsingham coldly trusted their

* It is computed that Louis the munificent paid only 12,000*l.* per annum for all the various species of eulogiums which he received. The pay of flatterers is as much raised as that of other day-labourers. I do not lament that the price is higher, but that genius should still be venal.

fame to the justice of the nation whom they faithfully served.

I use the term "affected patronage;" for, in spite of some apparent authorities to the contrary, I retain my opinion, that as superior excellence in the fine arts must proceed from exquisite moral perception in the artist, so the real lovers of these enchanting records of what is great and good must be stimulated to admiration by a correspondent passion for true eminence. It is the heaven-appointed office of genius to record the deeds of honour and virtue; and if mistake, or some base motive, induce her wayward hand to fix a tyrant in the shrine of a hero, or to adorn a traitor with the glory of a patriot, still homage is paid to virtue and honour, by borrowing their splendour for cruelty and guilt. But when the lives of the patrons and professors are in direct contradiction to the nature of

the profession, we rarely meet with the higher kinds of eminence in the artist, and we may, without illiberality suppose vanity and cunning instead of taste and feeling were the motives of the patron. The vigorous pen of the dissipated Savage could paint the hideousness of vice, but he fails when he attempts to delineate the delicate sensations of virtue; and it is remarked that gross manners seldom produce any thing beyond a satirist or a painter of broad humour and grotesque scenes.

With respect to patrons, can we suppose that Philip of Macedon really admired the orators and artists whom he bribed to assist him in his attempt to subjugate Athens? The cruel dissolute Sylla pretended to honour the sciences, but can we believe that he delighted in the tranquilizing speculations of natural philosophy, or the

humanizing injunction of ethics; the one describing the beauty and usefulness of a world which he had laid waste, the other the necessity of subduing those bloody and inordinate passions to which he sacrificed the lives of others, and ultimately his own? This man's myrmidons, bewildered by the glare of success, might persuade themselves that "Sylla the fortunate" was "Sylla the great;" but time has avenged the wrongs of truth, and has saved nothing from oblivion but the remembrance of his enormities.

Is patronage, then, of no service to literature and the arts? Yes, of the utmost importance, when it conduces to the education of youth, endows those frugal but respectable sinecures which foster lettered ease, or rewards eminent exertions in the cause of virtue, with that unosten-

tatious liberality which remunerated the 'Christian Sage,* and gave competence to his declining years ; " not for what he was expected to do, but for what he already had done." In this, and many other instances, which the present reign affords, experience testifies, that integrity in the protector and protected is the most direct road to reputation and decent sufficiency. These I hold to be the rewards to which talent may lawfully aspire. There is a respectability in honest disinterestedness that disarms the fiends of party, and the uneducated mind, which often feels itself at a loss to reconcile the crooked windings of deep policy and refined speculation, with the rule of right, can understand and reverence the simplicity of plain dealing. Include as much of natural and ac-

* His Majesty's intimation to Dr. Johnson when he gave him his pension.

quired talent as you please in the composition of a great man, or a great wit, I have no objection to these delightful adjuncts; I only insist that virtue and honesty must be the staple commodities or you fabricate a poison instead of a blessing. The more knowledge, foresight, penetration, acuteness and energy, which virtue and honour possess, the more do they resemble Divine Providence; but wicked wisdom armed with power is that "sword of the Lord" which is drawn to punish offending nations. We may acknowledge its might and fear its chastisement, but to worship it is really like the Indian adoration of the devil and the rattle-snake, a superstition so absurd that it never could gain votaries but in times when success is impiously invested with omnipotent honours. Confused by an extraordinary course of events, and accustom-

ed only to contemplate second causes, we see in the object of our admiration and terror not an instrument in the hand of God, but a mighty being whose extraordinary powers have made him great and terrible, and thus in the common course of reflection we transfer our veneration for the triumphant Napoleon to the supposed means of his elevation, and in proportion to his renown the standard of moral feeling is lowered.

Let us now direct our attention to the political antagonist, and, (as far as respects ourselves successful opponent) of this man's designs, who has been continually reproached with not cultivating the arts of peace and security, while he was required to preserve a menaced empire, exposed to every species of assault which powerful hostility and domestic faction could contrive. I will not adduce private testimonies,

nor even appeal to the style of public harangues or written documents, which would triumphantly testify that the mind of the British minister was deeply imbued with the chaste refinements of classical taste, while the Corsican, in every sentiment he utters, gives an example of some critical as well as moral defect, and only seems to possess that cruel talent of sarcasm which "shames with taunts the triumphs of his sword." I wish to found the contrast on the real permanent advantage which literature and the sciences are likely to obtain from the tenor of their respective administrations. And if the muses ever have been known to prefer despotism to independence, danger to security, profligate morals to habits of virtue, licentious manners to decorum, extravagance to temperance, and tumult to tranquillity, then I will own France and not Britain will

in future be their seat. But if vanity, corruption, and restraint, never have produced any thing truly sublime and stable, the Sister Isles may still hope to remain the favourite residence of the arts, as well as the emporium of commerce, secured by that wisdom which taught them to guard their shores from the contagion of anarchy however glossed by specious names. I have purposely confined my views to those temporal advantages, combined with that love of fame which pagans admitted as a stimulant to praise-worthy deeds, and without turning my eyes to a future state. I protest against inverting the ancient order of precedence, and I require that the graces should walk in the train of the virtues, and not act as harbingers of the furies. I acknowledge, that in the latter capacity, they will be less likely to suppose themselves entitled to di-

vine honours, but then they will be far more certain of obtaining and preserving just renown. We may exist as a nation, we may be happy and respectable as individuals, without taste; but without virtue and honesty the man is despicable, and the country must fall.

It is not my wish to depreciate the advantages of refined taste, and an enlarged understanding; or to liberate the great and opulent from the positive duty of affording *disinterested* encouragement to true merit. I see with much concern on the one hand, the many efforts of rigid (though perhaps well meaning) zeal to limit the sphere of elegant enjoyment, and to substitute the gloom of fanaticism for the exhilarating sunshine of learning and wit, directed to useful or even innocent sources of pleasure; and on the other, the advocates of the muses and

the arts elevating genius into undue consequence, and giving that praise to mere talent which we should only ascribe to ability honourably exercised. I could speak of my attachment to the imitative arts, and the delight which I take in the harmless sports of the imagination, with the same rapturous enthusiasm as Goldsmith does of poetry. Though, through the influence of bad habits, exquisite genius may eventually become the minister of vice, I am persuaded it originally results from strong pure moral feelings, energetically acting upon a cultivated and enlarged understanding. By admiration of what is noble, sublime, beautiful, or salutary, in animate or inanimate nature, in the recorded events of past times or the present age, or in the ample regions of fiction, themes are presented to the artist and the bard. Wickedness, when uncombined with

the expectation of local advantage, is as repulsive to true taste as deformity, and every attempt to give it celebrity, except as an object of terror, disgust, or avoidance, must fail. But the critic, the artist, the poet, the orator, or whatever form genius may assume, who appeals to the best feelings of the heart, may, if his powers are equal to his subject, expect a renown, limited perhaps, but not transitory, independent of fashion, and often slowly triumphing over neglect. And as the leisure and self-possession of temperance afford the best advantages to study, so they who are most familiar with the motives, enjoyments, and exertions of virtue and goodness, will always have a model to refer to when they want to impart language to correct feeling, or expression to a sublime countenance. The natural philosopher will avoid the cold cant of deism, and even in scien-

tific pursuits the influence of moral principle will be felt producing humane inventions, useful discoveries and mechanical contrivances, in which the sordid views of interest will be made subservient to the nobler purposes of benevolence. Among other happy effects, we shall discover that when selfishness does not act as a first principle, the individual is most likely to procure real advantage, and that when vanity is subdued, the ends which vanity aimed at, will probably be obtained. Thus when talent ceases to lay claim to divine honours, it may eventually obtain distinctions and rewards, which are incontestibly divine.

CHAP. XXII.

Fie wrangling Queen!
Whom every thing becomes, to chide, to laugh,
To weep, whose every passion fully strives
To make itself in thee fair and admired.

SHAKESPEARE.

WE form our resolutions in the closet, when the still voice of reason has convinced our judgment; and forgetting that we shall be required to keep them when the busy passions have raised an army of opponents, we never suspect their instability till the event shews us the weakness of self-defending fortitude or virtue. Lady Avondel continued fixed in her inten-

tion of making her home extremely pleasant to her husband, till her young Sidney was seized with the measles, attended with really alarming symptoms: she then again relapsed into her constitutional fault of being engrossed with one care, and, by wholly devoting herself to her suffering babe, gave complete success to Paulina's machinations.

"Avondel" (said the latter to the Earl, in one of those tete-a-tetes for which Emily afforded but too frequent opportunities) "should the father and the husband make you forget the friend? Are all the energies of your enlarged mind absorbed in the care of keeping from the tombs of your ancestors that infantine form, which, susceptible only of animal feeling, can scarcely be said to live? and have you no pity for the living death which I must suffer when Monthermer reaches

England? I shall then be exiled from every scene on which intelligence has cast one radiant beam, and dragged to his dreary mansion in the wilds of Scotland, where, I am told, science will never call till it sets out on a missionary scheme to found colleges in Greenland. There I shall have no relief from the vapid sameness of his conversation, except in the deafening sound of winds and waves, the reverberation of the hunter's horn among the rocks; or the hideous clamour of drunken bacchanals. The pallet and the chisel, the lute and the harp, must be abandoned. I cannot chaunt Metastasio to deaf rocks, nor translate Petrarch for puritanical goatherds. I can only transform myself into a buskined wood-nymph, or a veiled Bequin, and wander over mountains and morasses to visit sick highlanders, who curse my interference, throw my nostrums

to the dogs, and are content to die of those diseases which cannot be cured by sour crout and the spell of an old beldam. In time, the immortal mind will be changed by the incrustations of habit, and I shall become so truly domesticated, and such an adept in the pharmacopia, that if my jailer permits me to take a transient glimpse of your world, I shall no longer fear being rivalled in the affections of my beloved Emilia by a Dr. Slop or a Mrs. Caudle. You look grave, Avondel, I own I am piqued. In vain have I attempted to convince my friend that any one beside herself can watch a slumbering infant with due attention. I have offered to supply her place. I have told her you were within, alone, out of spirits, wanting society. She heard me not, but continued to weep over her child, and at last awoke him by feeling if he were feverish. Surely,

nature meant she should have acted as inspector to an asylum for orphan babes, but meeting with an adverse gale as her soul descended "from its warm abode;"* she became the wife of the dignified Avondel."

The Earl either listened to these sarcasms in moody silence, or by an effort of strained gaiety started some lively topic, in which Paulina's talents soon contrived to make him really interested. If he attempted to palliate Emily's excessive tenderness by pleading the strength of her attachments, Paulina knew how to instil a sly suggestion against her delicacy or discretion. "Yes," said she one day, "she rather adores than love you. Yet, my ever respected friend, allow me to suggest a wish that her affection were less ostensible. A wife who truly

* See the Indian Philosopher, by Dr. Watts.

loves, and is really happy, is not always dwelling on a theme which so much discussion makes suspicious. She talks too incessantly of the goodness of her dearest lord. Her eyes swell with tears which you and I know to be tears of overflowing affection; but I have seen old gossips notice them as telling a tale of real unhappiness, and contradicting all the smooth language of her lips. You should check her for her uxoriousness, and, above all, pray desire her not to fight your battles so warmly in public. She is always defending your reputation, even when it is not assailed. This is being tremulously susceptible. The other morning she met your political rival Norbury at my toilet. It was accidentally, I am sure, but had she met a Bengal tyger she could not have looked more terrified. He was civil and complimentary, and she became

so gracious, that at parting he kissed her hand. My Lord, you look uneasy. Surely Emilia can have no reserves with the idol of her fond heart: I know her friendships and dislikes are all governed by your will."

As Lord Avondel had a peculiar dislike to that acquiescent sameness which leaves no stamp of character on the mind, so he was enthusiastic in his admiration of passive fortitude in a woman. In her attendance on her little boy, Emily had caught cold; a severe tooth-ache was the consequence; and when the child began to recover, she had leisure to attend to her own health, and promised to submit to the painful operation of having a tooth extracted. Her previous cares had rendered her body weak, and her imagination vivid. She meditated on the pain she was to undergo till after having suffered more in idea than she

would have done in reality, she tremulously impeded the endeavours of the dentist to relieve her, and placed herself in a dangerous as well as agonising situation. Paulina discovered these particulars, and resolved to play off a contrary game. One day when Avondel was present, after delighting a large circle by the spirit and grace of her exertions, a servant announced that the surgeon was in waiting. The guests retired; but the Earl was intreated to remain. "I am suffering," said she, "indescribable torture from a tooth, and am resolved to have it removed this morning; but as the hours of liberty are precious, I would not send excuses to my friends. If I should shrink, Avondel, recal me to what I owe to my own character, by a look of calm reproach. Is it not thus you fortify the gentle spirit of your Emilia?"

Refusing to be supported, she fixed herself on the carpet, and with an unaltered smile surveyed the instruments, inquired into their various powers, and bade the operator be resolute. Having thus played off the farce of fortitude to her admiring dupe, she feigned to be convinced by the arguments of the dentist respecting the impolicy of removing what was equally sound and beautiful, on the bare possibility of its being the seat of a pain, for which he prepared a safe and sovereign specific. Her torture, which was as real as her intention of enduring any actual anguish or despoliation, seemed to subside, and as the affectation of heroism had helped to diminish Lord Avondel's esteem for his spiritless Emily, the desired end was answered, and the accommodating dentist dismissed, to sound the praises of her magnanimity and generosity.

When by such insinuations to Lady Avondel's disadvantage, or cheap displays of her own superiority, she had stimulated the Earl to behave with occasional harshness to his consort, she would reprove his severity in terms which tended to aggravate rather than reform. "You are too austere," she would say. "Yet, Avondel, since you must confess that the magnanimity of your nature makes you despise imbecility, why did you unite your fate with one who never included fortitude in her code of virtues? Or why in the early hours of marriage, when her docile mind might have received a stamp from your's, did you confirm her weakness by a habit of indulgence, only pardonable when doating love obtains the hard-won object of its long solicitude? When your wife owned that her hand

courted your acceptance, she virtually discovered that infirmity of mind which had not strength to controul inclinations confessedly contrary to her own sense of decorum. Yet, Avondel, we must each of us bear our respective burdens, the fates forbade the union of Clorinda and Tancred. Come, I will set you an example of magnanimity. Promise to visit me in my highland eyrie. You will find me learning Erse and potting grouse, or brushing through the fern after Monthermer, while he patriotically endeavours to fix the luxurious magnolia, and the foliage of the Ganges on the hideous wastes of his Grampian mountains, or to bespangle the dreary confines of Loch Fyne with the odorous flowers of my beloved Arno. I will appear reconciled to the bleak horrors of Lochabar, and ceasing to regret the blue serene

sky which smiles on the vine-clad hills of Tuscany. At least we will hide our regret from the contemptuous pity of grosser souls. Only to me shall you acknowledge the pain you feel from the narrowness of your consort's mind ; only with you will I regret the want of social enjoyments, and my distance from that happy region where nature and art, science and beauty, conspire to adorn lovely Italy. But while Monthermer and his mountaineers are engaged at their barbarous sports, ere we catch the local stupidity of the natives, and sit like prim statues with our eyes rivetted upon the floor, as if the carpet were a cabalistical tablet from which the spirit of conversation might be conjured by due attention, I will only for your privileged-ear bid the Tuscan harp thus awake its long-forgotten strains."

Sons of the frigid North, away,
 Ye shall not judge the ardent lay
 By beaming suns inspir'd ;
 When fancy fed on views sublime,
 And souls congenial to the clime
 My kindred song admir'd.

Born, where along Italia's skies
 The sun in cloudless splendor flies,
 I breath'd poetic fire ;
 Beside Vaclusia's fount I slept,
 O'er Yirgil's sacred bay I wept,
 I sung to Tasso's lyre ;

A child I lay on Arno's side,
 And saw the silver Naiad glide
 To lave Lorenzo's towers.
 The velvet pansie form'd my bed,
 The olive waving o'er my head
 Strew'd me with snowy flowers.

I've seen the marble domes expand,
 The wonders of Palladio's hand,
 Built for a race sublime ;
 There echoing through the princely walls,
 I've heard the swells and dying falls
 Of music's thrilling chime.

Majestic Florence, seat divine,
 When shall I tread again thy shrine?
 There Titian's colours flame ;
 Urbino's awful forms are there,
 And Sculpture still in route despair
 Adores thy sea-born dame.

Taught by the storied arch or urn,
 Sacred to ancient worth, to spurn
 At souls of baser hue,
 How wept I when thy hallow'd earth,
 Parent of science, taste, and worth,
 Received my last adieu.

I've seen the burning suns of Inde
 Condense the almond's turgid rind,
 Th' odorous nard refine,
 Th' anana's pulp nectareous swell,
 And in the cocoa's ample shell
 Secrete the milky wine.

I rov'd on Arcot's sandy shore,
 And heard the distant lion rear,
 Driv'n from his promis'd spoil;
 I trod the jungle's deep recess,
 And trembled lest my feet should press
 The serpent's twisted coil.

Where, by a thousand rivers fed,
 Swift Ganges fills his spacious bed,
 I pac'd the hallow'd sod:
 While self-devoted widows flam'd,
 And tortur'd fakirs, blind and maim'd,
 Appeas'd their cruel god.

Orissa's sullen genius cull'd
 Her poppy wreaths, no torpor lull'd
 My bosom's ardent glow;
 Where base ambition's selfish aim
 Enkindles discord's endless flame,
 I felt love's nobler woe.

Yet life's calm vale delights not me,
 The rushing storm, the swelling sea
 Suit my august desires ;
 Give me the cavern's horrid maze,
 The beetling precipice, the blaze
 Of pale volcanic fires.

Thus too in man, creation's prime,
 I gaze but on those forms sublime
 Which hold a lofty soul ;
 Thus, noble Avondel, I see
 Greatness personifi'd in thee,
 And own its full controul.

Thus did Lord Avondel drink the bewitching poison of flattery, and submit his superior mind to the machinations of a coquette, till his principles, once correct even to austerity, became so warped and contaminated, that he not only viewed his own wife with indifference or disgust, but allowed himself to seek and to find happiness in the society of the consort of his absent friend ; viewing her not merely as the skilful caterer who supplied his vanity with delicacies, but as

the companion of his hours of delight, and the faithful confidant of his domestic sorrows. Those irregularities in her conduct, which his judgment had so justly condemned, were now either forgotten or lost in the blaze of superior excellence ; and he whose penetration was accustomed to read the hearts of others with a precision which made him fastidiously overlook the just claims of merit, because stained with imperfection, now found sincerity and disinterested attachment in a woman who, though she deemed him superior to the rest of his sex, aimed at the possession of his heart from motives of revènge or vanity. With the inconsistency common to those principles which do not spring from the thought-restraining injunctions of religion, Lord Avondel began to think there was no crime in transferring his affections to Paulina. He never had

professed an ardent passion for his wife. She chose him, and it was her duty either to conform her manners to his character, that he might contemplate her as the reflex of himself, or to reconcile her mind to the scanty comfort of possession. He depended on his nice sense of honour, and the calm temperament of his passions, to preserve him from those familiarities in which he still saw guilt; and Paulina had so firmly persuaded him of her invulnerable purity, that his conviction of the hopelessness of any attempt upon her person would alone have preserved him from exposing himself to the mortification of a repulse. He believed that himself and his admired mistress would be quoted as examples of pure platonic friendship, and his delirium sometimes rose so high as to make him attach respectability and even merit to a preference which,

though it violated the laws of God and the sanctions of civilized society, he no longer attempted to disguise.

The world of fashion soon divided into two parties ; I do not mean into the rigid and the dissolute, since their opinions must be readily anticipated ; but what are called the decent part of good company ranged themselves under different banners. Lady Paulina was so very agreeable, her entertainments were so well managed, comprised so much of what every body wished to meet, and afforded so much taste, wit, and refined enjoyment, that really, as there was no bearing to be excluded from her circle, many resolved to make candour act as lady in waiting, and to believe (or at least to say) that there was no harm in her affair with Lord Avondel ; who, considering that his wife chose to seclude herself from the world, and was besides of a wretch-

ed temper, found himself obliged (poor man) to seek comfort somewhere else.

In contradiction to this statement, the partizans of Lady Avondel loudly exclaimed against the baseness of deserting an amiable pretty young creature, whose affections he entirely possessed, and whose fortune had raised him from a state of restraint and embarrassment to opulence. They found a reason for her love of privacy and dejection in his estrangement, instead of considering her temper as the cause of this alienation. They denied the charge of her being ill-humoured, or rather evaded it by saying, that in similar circumstances her accusers would find it difficult to avoid feeling hurt at such manifest injuries. The Paulinians consisted of the gay, the young, and the beautiful, while Lady Avondel's vindicators were chiefly composed of

those very worthy people who are invited to second-rate parties, or allowed to fill a supper table when the town gets thin, or every body is ill of the influenza.

These opposite statements afford two different inferences, of which inexperience may make a prudential use. In the first place, when there is a manifest difficulty of speaking of any action in its direct and appropriate terms without using such as must revolt the moral feelings, we may be apprised that there must be something unjustifiable in it. The equivocal term *affair* is a most suspicious expletive. An affair of honour implies intentional murder, and an affair of gallantry one of those crimes which we are expressly assured will exclude us from the kingdom of God. Soft terms are merely a gossamer veil thrown over sin, and

as has been often observed there was less real impurity in the gross language of our ancestors.

I would next remind those who, instead of guarding against extreme sensibility as an infirmity which prevents us from performing our social duties, cultivate it as a virtue, that the world is as apt to connect depression with ill-humour as it is to call reserve pride ; and people are so much more willing to compromise their candour than to give up their discernment, that the majority of mankind determine upon our characters from one single instance, though perhaps contradicted by the general tenour of our lives. With regard to temper, the prevailing habits of society seem to require that every body should add somewhat to the general stock of pleasure, and melancholy is as little tolerated as spleen, even when (as is

sometimes the case) it subsists with the most perfect benevolence, and a desire of conferring the happiness which it cannot feel. Now, though in this liberal age dissipation is commended, extravagance pitied, and libertinism pardoned; ill-nature meets with no quarter, because ill-nature is never pleasant, and is therefore always hostile to the feelings of those who in their desire of self-indulgence are ever ready to sacrifice the valuable to the agreeable. I mean not to imply that there is any sterling worth in ill-nature considered abstractedly. I regard it as equally despicable and odious; but as I have occasionally seen it united to some valuable qualities on which it acts as the small-pox does on beauty, I intreat the truly deserving to avoid incrusting their virtues with this hideous deformity, since it gives vice an adventitious advantage,

and renders her misrepresentations more insinuatingly dangerous to inexperience. Minerva did not wear the Gorgon's head as a mask, and though Diana was as chaste as she was beautiful, she never thought it expedient to adopt the head-dress of the furies. I would especially inform those wives who circumscribe their ideas of conjugal duty within the precincts of chastity, and who, provided they are not unfaithful to their husbands, allow themselves to be their tormentors, that true religion applies its correctives equally to the temper and the passions. We can never hope to be excused for the non-performance of a daily duty because we do not commit a sin to which probably in the whole course of our lives we never had any temptation. The world is less merciful to ungracious infirmities than to what it most falsely and absurdly denomi-

nates amiable vices. Let us not sanction the delusion, but, by calling in prudence and meekness as allies to chastity and decorum, rescue them from the opprobrium which they must suffer when crabbed perverseness or waspish peevishness appears in their retinue.

CHAP. XXIII.

This I hold firm ;
 Virtue may be assail'd, but never hurt,
 Surpris'd by unjust force, but not inthrall'd ;
 But evil, on itself shall back recoil,
 And mix no more with goodness.

MILTON.

LADY AVONDEL felt the painful change in her situation, as soon as the recovery of her child allowed her to look on any other object. Till then, she had rather rejoiced than repined when she knew her lord was amused and happy. She was conscious his house was a melancholy one. In her brightest hours she thought meanly of her companion-

able powers, but when depressed by care and despondence she needed consolation but could impart no delight. Often she wished, and sometimes she thought it would have been very kind, that her lord would have staid at home, and endeavoured by his strong sense to fortify her mind against the threatened trial; which surely, as a parent, he must also feel and fear. But then, she remembered the important claims his country had upon his services at a time when her councils were distracted and her efforts unsuccessful; and after a day spent in painful exertion he required an evening of relaxation, not of mournful sympathy. Besides, he had often comforted her and reasoned her into resignation; and though it was heavenly to be so consoled, to hear his voice inspire while it exemplified fortitude, and feel his pity dry the tear he almost praised; still, so invinci-

ble was her weakness, that the courage and cheerfulness which she felt in his presence retired with her comforter. In Paulina he found a mind of a more vigorous stamp : and though indeed she could not love Paulina, she endeavoured to hope she was still so much her friend that she would palliate rather than aggravate her infirmities.

But when Emily was again able to change the nursery for the saloon, the Earl's absence, and her consciousness of the scene of his engagements, awoke regrets, which were heightened by perceiving that Paulina assumed an avowed superiority, and gloried in paying and receiving those attentions which seemed the exclusive privilege of the connubial connection. Lord Avondel was now never affectionate in his manner to his wife ; he was civil, cold, or perhaps wayward. How different was his behaviour to Paulina.

Emily might have said with the injured Dorothea

“ With her he spent those pleasing hours
Which did to me belong,
She in his eyes did all things right,
While I did all things wrong.”

A change so surprising at first rather astounded than afflicted her. She doubted the conviction of her own senses. She believed confinement had made her captious, splenetic, and suspicious ; especially, as Paulina sometimes in her hearing reproved Avondel for wounding the susceptible mind of his charming wife. The events of every succeeding day tended to change astonishment into despair, and Emily was convinced that she endured what was to her the greatest deprivation, the loss of her husband's heart. The world now appeared to be a dreary void, her task in life was ended ; she almost wished the beloved child, her care had apparently rescued from an early

grave, wrapped in his funeral habiliments, and herself breathless by his side, insensible either of his death or the unkindness of his still dear and honoured father.

"Grief does not kill," or at least kills so slowly that like consumption it permits its victims to revive with fallacious hopes. Sometimes Emily fancied, from some transient starts of attention, that her Lord's affection was returning. Again she looked forward to General Monthermer's arrival, and the Caledonian banishment which Paulina anticipated with so much whimsical resignation and real abhorrence. Lastly, she almost thought that time would blunt the edge of regret; and though she felt no symptom of diminished sensibility, perhaps the increasing transports of the mother might leave her less time to ruminate on the sorrows of the wife.

The most painful circumstance attending her present situation was the frequent presence of Paulina, who, knowing how necessary Lady Avondel's countenance was to her preserving the shreds and patches of her reputation, continued to court the woman in whose miseries she triumphed, and with the easy impudence of confirmed determined guilt smiled on the tears she caused. Besides the usefulness of Emily's apparent protection, she was gratified by the frequent opportunities of indulging her innate maliciousness by torturing the gentle wife of Avondel, for whom, from their first interview, she had conceived a sovereign contempt. If she found her dispirited, she railed against the mean passion of jealousy, and informed her that in Italy it was ever the wife's aim to engage her husband as the cicisbeo of her particular friend, that

she might be sure of her good offices. If some instance of consideration, or even common civility, from her still adored lord illuminated Emily's dejected countenance, Paulina took care to cloud the sunshine by some display of wit or science which fixed his attention on herself. The diamond tiara was often worn with proud ostentation, as a princely gift from her noble-minded friend, and she insinuated to Emily that her sacrifice of a picture in conformity to his wishes had been rewarded by a more entire devotedness of himself. To whom should the pensive wife complain? certainly not to her Lord, for Paulina had not yet reached that summit of effrontery to permit Avondel to witness her insolence to his countess, to whom in his presence she behaved with dissembled tenderness and respect, while the cold displeasure of a mind

too ingenuous for dissimulation confirmed his opinion that Paulina had ample cause to complain of Emily's waywardness, and lament the cruelty of only meeting with aversion from the woman whose affection she wished to conciliate. Indeed, so marked was this aversion that even common observers perceived it, and it served to confirm the general opinion that with much apparent quietness Lady Avondel was really a peevish character.

To counteract his wife's dislike, or rather to shew that it would meet with no indulgence from him, Lord Avondel made the praises of Paulina his favourite topic of conversation, to which Emily listened in silence, not daring to contradict, and not able to conceive his motives. Did he wish to change her opinions? He must know too much of her heart and of human nature to expect *his* commen-

dations to subdue the dislike his preference had cemented. Did he wish her to adopt Paulina's manner? Impossible! nature had cast them in different moulds, she wanted energy, accomplishments, talents, and confidence. She could not bear the stare of general observation, the burst of universal applause would overwhelm her. She durst not engage in a contest of wit lest she should be surprized into some indecorum, nor could she rally an absurdity for fear she might give pain. She dreaded engaging in a literary dispute lest she should seem ostentatious, the unchequered quietness of her life did not allow her to repeat entertaining adventures, and as to her good works they were performed in secret, and consisting of charity, humility, and self-government, though recorded in heaven, they were forgotten by herself. In fine, so much did

she dislike the character, she would not assimilate herself to Paulina even to secure that inestimable prize, the heart of Avondel.

Yet some small sacrifice she was willing to make. The enchanting Italian had prepared a musical entertainment to commemorate her birth-day. It was to be in a new style, adapted to the exhibition of her own powers, the pauses of which were to be filled up by a few friends who consented to become amateur performers, contented to purchase the eclat of being known as her intimates by acting as foils to the idol, and chaunting like the chorus in the Greek tragedy, when the principal personage required an interval of rest. It was determined that these attendants should be all attired in a peculiar costume, and appear as nymphs encircling the tutelar deity, who, crowned with laurel, should be termed Harmo-

nia, the Mother of the Muses. The plan would be spoiled, the festival inverted, and Paulina made wretched, if her most dear Emilia refused to insert her name on this scroll. The world would recollect the events of the last gala and would draw inferences which it would be terrible to think of. Lady Avondel's voice was like her manner, soft, plaintive, of small compass, and only remarkable for artless sweetness. Her skill in music was very limited; she had devoted little time to the cultivation of this science, and all her aim was to amuse herself or a few most particular friends. But as a foil she was invaluable to Paulina, and, considering that the reputation of that lady seemed to totter on its base, she was still more useful as a friend. For all these reasons her presence was required with unusual earnestness, and even Lord Avondel so far threw off his affected indifference to his wife's con-

duct as to desire her to attend, and comply with the part Paulina had assigned her, resolving to be calm and collected, she acquiesced.

As might be expected, Paulina's triumph was as complete as her vanity could desire. Such notes, such strains, were never heard; so much grace never was exhibited. She varied her instruments, but it was only to give new pleasure. She paused, and the subordinate muses were successively called upon. One was scientific, another in fine voice, some introduced the fashionable shake, others were true to time and tune; none but Paulina united melody, harmony, and grace. At last, Lady Avondel was called forth. The song prescribed her by Paulina, was one of those unmeaning nothings of the day which depended entirely on execution, and was therefore designed to expose all her

faults ; but, by a mistake in the leader of the concert, two stanzas strikingly adapted to her situation and character were presented to her. She had time for recollecting her resolution to be collected and calm, and determining at least to rival Paulina in the praise of prompt compliance, for the first time in her life she sang in public, and by the meek dejection of her looks, and faltering sweetness of her voice, gave full expression to these lines.

O tell me have I lost thy heart,
Cold are thy words thy look austere ?
Nor fear the secret to impart,
No loud complaints shall wound thine ear.
Unseen by thee my tears shall flow
Till sorrow wastes my youthful bloom,
Life will not always strive with woe,
And grief is silent in the tomb.

A loud burst of approbation ensued ; the modest performer courtesied to her auditors, and looked round to see if her lord witnessed her success. With

regret she perceived he was not in the circle. He had honoured Paulina's repeated exertions with the unequivocal approbation of deep attention. Could he not have spared her a few of his precious moments? Did his leaving the room at the instant she was called upon imply contempt or anxiety? Norbury indeed was present, and seemed inclined by the warmth of his encomiums to silence every other eulogist; but his praises pained her still more than the absence of him whom she wished to please. Her reflections were interrupted by Paulina, who would not permit a long space to Emily's triumph. Embracing her with an enthusiastic air, she protested that this interesting effusion of nature entitled her to the chief honours of the evening, and then crowning her with her own laurel chaplet, she exchanged the character of the musician

for that of the improvvisatrice, and recited the following stanzas to Love, taking care that her eyes should glance at Norbury, who stood fixed in admiration of the countess as often as she described the raptures of the lover.

God of the rainbow wings, didst thou purloin
 The Promethean fire of beauty's eyes,
 To form those sylphs who still in Psyche's shrine
 Sport, while in day-dreams wrapt the lover lies ?
 There admiration bids his ardent gaze
 Drink deep of ecstacy's bewildering flood,
 Till in one darling object he surveys
 'The blended charms of "perfect, fair, and good."
 Not such as hover'd round th' Athenian sage,
 As pondering o'er Illysus banks he hung,
 Emilia's face presents the living page
 Of soft delight, and grace for ever young.
 Light through the buoyant air the lover sees
 His mistress glide, she lifts her filmy veil,
 Her curling locks are parted by the breeze,
 And sweets odorous float upon the gale.
 Still dreams the raptur'd youth, thy busy train
 Wake the soft choral of harmonious song,
 Emilia pours the soul-expressive strain,
 The strain of love attun'd by beauty's tongue.
 It dies in air, she listens to his praise,
 He sees the kindling blush, the melting smile;

The charm dissolves, and waking he surveys
 The world's dark wilderness of care and toil.
 To soft Emilia's airy form succeed
 The earth-born gnomes of treachery and wrong;
 Pale envy scoffing sounds her scrannel reed,
 And drowns the chaunt of fancy's charmed song.
 God of the rainbow wings, let hope and joy
 Thy bright creation weave these dreams divine,
 Save the fond lover from the world's annoy,
 And let him slumber still in Psyche's shrine.

Lady Avondel was too much disconcerted by the distinctions which she had received, the absence of her lord, and the raptures of Norbury, to attend to Paulina's rhapsodies. Indeed the sanctity of her mind, which caused her to be pained instead of pleased at attracting any heart but her husband's, would have prevented her from understanding, that the wily Italian endeavoured to give publicity to Norbury's passion, not only as an excuse for her own attachment to Lord Avondel, but to lower the exalted reputation of Emily to the level of

those married coquettes who pique themselves on personal chastity, while they encourage the advances of libertines. Slander had now the opportunity of whispering, that if the earl had his chere amie, the countess had her favourite cicisbeo. The song which, if pointed at her lord's neglect, was so singularly affecting, if designed to heal some breach with her gallant, was either the snare of a demirep or the lure of a wedded trifler, solicitous to rival unconnected beauty in the number and notoriety of her conquests. Lord Avondel was not present; they could not, therefore, have been his affections which she wished to recall. Norbury was evidently much moved, and the permission of conversing with her the rest of the evening, and leading her to her carriage, seemed to indicate a reconciliation. Who would have expected such tergiversa-

tion in the sober-minded Emily? But we live in a mighty odd world.

Such were the conclusions which Paulina wished to enforce; but she was disappointed in her design, though she increased Emily's sufferings by affording Lord Norbury an opportunity of publicly renewing his disgraceful pretensions. He was encouraged, so to do, not so much by discovering how deeply the young countess felt her wrongs, as by perceiving that Lord Avondel had really become recreant to his liege faith. While with the confiding generosity and watchful tenderness of a husband he protected the virtue, and guarded the reputation of his wife, the boldest views of the libertine only pointed at galling the pride of his rival, and paining the delicacy of the lady by exciting the suspicion of a criminal intrigue. But he now renewed his devoirs with full

hopes of such complete success as would after a few amorous, and some legal, manœuvres transfer the united wealth of the Mandevilles and Delamores from the ungenial desert of Avondel, to the sunny hills of Norbury. He had been early initiated in that prudential species of alchymy that taught him to extract gold from the most unpromising materials, and though he often preferred pleasure to profit, yet, as self was his god, it was peculiarly delightful to him to combine a profitable speculation with a pleasurable indulgence. The probability of securing not only the person, but the wealth of Emily, induced him to renounce a plan he had once adopted of mortifying Avondel by rivalling him in the affections of Paulina, which, with the experience of a man of the world, he conceived would provoke him more than the seduction

of his wife. Such were the plans of Norbury, but in either instance he was doomed to feel the disappointments to which vanity is ever exposed. Though Paulina was ready to admit him into the choir of eulogists who sang her praises, though he might devote his time and his talents to exalt her celebrity, or sacrifice his fortune to gratify her extravagance, she possessed a strong but perverted understanding; nor would she "on the fair mountain leave to feed and batten on the moor." Neither could flattery, the affectation of sympathy, ardent affection, and profound devotion, obtain one cold mark of gratitude, one faint expression of sensibility, one extorted proof of confidence, from the faithful wife, whose heart, though deeply wounded, refused to dictate one complaint, or to form any plan for retorting her sufferings on him who

"in spite of her wrongs and his unkindness," she still dearly "loved."

At this trying period, when the want of a friend often stimulated the gentle sufferer to break those injunctions which separated her from her beloved aunt, and the fear of afflicting her with the knowledge of her sorrows, or offending her by the breach of her positive command to conceal all matrimonial disquietude, kept her silent, Lady Glenvorne returned to London, after a long absence, during which she had visited her revered friend at Lime Grove. Emily enjoyed the purest pleasure at hearing of the improved health and spirits of the dear guardian of her youth, and felt herself rewarded for her forbearance and obedience by knowing Lady Selina attributed the restoration of those blessings to her full satisfaction at her niece's happiness, "which,"

said she, "has turned my prayers into thanksgivings." Some ladies would have drawn such inferences from Emily's pale woe-worn face as would have compelled her ingenuous disposition to own her aunt had been too sanguine in her conclusions, but Lady Glenvorne was not of the tribe of *sifters*. She saw enough to confirm the suspicions which report had suggested, and she resolved to act the part of a confidential friend, without submitting the young countess to the pain and indelicacy of confessing her husband's errors.

The unblemished propriety with which the worthy marchioness had conducted herself through life, her superior understanding and noble connections, stamped an importance upon her opinions which all the raillery of the dissipated, who affected to call her speaker of the house of rigids, was

not able to efface. The first check which Paulina received in her career was Lady Glenvorne's refusing to visit her, and pointedly declining parties at which she knew she and Lord Avondel would be present. Mortified at this avowed contempt, and in order to remove the only reason which she thought could be ostensibly given for this dereliction, the haughty Italian determined not to wait for Monthermer's return to England, but to appear at court in a style of magnificence in dress, equipage, and attendants, which should throw a disparaging shade over the hitherto unrivalled splendour of the house of Glenvorne. Just as she had completed her preparations, an intimation was given that she would be more secure of being graciously noticed if she came countenanced by the presence of Lady Avondel. To borrow lustre of another

was galling to her irritable passions, though she thought there would be no difficulty in procuring Emily's attendance; but contrary to all previous experience of her acquiescing complacence, she not only refused to accompany her, but even to appear at the drawing room on the day she was presented. Lord Avondel, now sunk into a woman's tool, was employed to enforce obedience. He inquired into the cause of this unusual unwillingness to pay her duty to her sovereign, and was calmly answered, Lady Glenvorne had convinced her it would be improper.

Thunderstruck with confusion, the earl was now compelled to draw the mortifying conclusion, so painful to his pride, to his high sense of honour, and his desire of being considered as the glass in which the age should dress itself, namely, that his pure, refined

platonie attachment to the most accomplished and attractive of her sex, instead of making them the admiration of the world, subjected the object of his regard to such a suspicion of infamy, that even his own wife refused to sanction the innocence of the connection by giving it her countenance. Was Paulina's character irreverently canvassed, not only by the Stingwell coterie, and the Gourmands who sauced Sir Joseph Caddy's turtle with a well-mixed compound of flattery and slander, but did even the intelligent and the candid entertain opinions to her disadvantage? Or did Emily's determination spring from the wayward petulance of jealousy, which, by her indiscreet communications, she had persuaded Lady Glenvorne to approve, and then pleaded her name as a screen to her own narrow-minded fastidiousness?

After biting his lips, playing on the table with his hand, and shaking his foot with more visible irritation than suited a great man on so trivial an occasion, Lord Avondel resumed that air of cold politeness which had lately marked his domestic deportment. "There is something," said he "in this extraordinary business which has excited my curiosity. Perhaps, Lady Avondel, you will have the goodness to tell me why you asked the marchioness's opinion on this point, especially as you might have anticipated what would be *my* sentiments?"

"I will have courage," thought Emily, "for in this affair I cannot have been wrong: why then should I tremble? Alas! he had not used to call me Lady Avondel."

"Lady Glenvorne's opinion," said she, in a tremulous voice, "was given unsolicited; and, from what passed at

the moment, I am convinced had your lordship been present, you would so far have coincided with her as to forbid my appearing in public with Lady Paulina."

"This is still more enigmatical," returned the earl, willing to avoid owning the conviction which he felt. "If I do not impertinently intrude on confided secrets"—

"My dearest lord, promise not to be angry with me. You must remember your approval of my aunt's sentiments on the chariness of reputation, and the necessity of avoiding suspected characters."

"Suspected characters, Lady Avondel! Who attaches suspicion to Lady Paulina Monthermer? A woman of honour and virtue equal to your own."

"I will believe your testimony, my lord, *against* the opinion of the world; but till that opinion is changed,

or shall I say corrected, pardon me if I say I think your wife, the mother of the infant heir of your honours, should not appear to countenance what is talked of as an impropriety."

"Be explicit," said the earl. "What part of Paulina's conduct is thus condemned? Is it possible that my friendship for her should unhappily be esteemed to depreciate what it surely might exalt?"

Emily was silent.

"Madam," resumed he, "I have a right to defend myself, and I insist on a reply. If any childish jealousy, if pique at extraordinary attainments, if any wayward suspicion that I have neglected you, has tempted you in your intercourse with your confidential friends to defame Paulina and asperse me, you owe us public reparation. For I solemnly protest that my attachment to her is the tribute of virtuous

admiration to superior excellence, the grateful incense of a heart penetrated by her kind endeavours to remove the thorns which strew my pillow."

"My lord," said Emily, whose tears could no longer be restrained, "you are the first person whom I ever permitted to discover that I had a sorrow except my anxiety for my dear infant. The first wish of my heart is to see you happy and honourable, my next, to contribute to your being so; and if Lady Paulina is more successful in her endeavours to promote your comforts, or to relieve your cares, blame nature, which has limited my powers of pleasing, and not a heart exclusively and eternally your own."

The earl was softened: his native generosity struggled with the delirium of a culpable attachment, nor could he behold the tears which he had forced to flow without enduring the

pain of self-condemnation. This was an anguish which he ever sought to shun, and pressing the trembling hand of Emily, he gently asked her, when she would acquire sufficient fortitude to avoid afflicting him and herself? This was so like the style of his expostulations in their happy days of connubial harmony and confidence, that she was almost again persuaded that she had been very wrong, and was more inclined to beg forgiveness than to expect reparation. Her meek solicitude to be restored to his favour renewed his hopes of success. Yet, let me acquit him of the baseness of endeavouring to cajole his wife into an approbation of his intrigues. Pained by the distress of which he knew himself the cause, he determined if he could remove the cloud which he had cast over Paulina's reputation to remit his future attentions, though in so

doing, he sacrificed his greatest pleasure, her enchanting and animating society.

“My Emily,” said he, caressing his weeping countess, who hung on him with every token of reconciled affection, “let us quit a subject so painful to us both: Paulina shall not know why you hesitated to attend her. She may suppose you were indisposed, or out of spirits. I would not for the universe have her suspect the gross and illiberal rumours which have so causelessly distressed you, and which will be so fully refuted by your conducting her to the drawing-room.”

“It is impossible,” returned the countess.

“Courage, my good girl. Though you are thus nervous and agitated to-day, tomorrow may bring you recruited spirits, and then I will not doubt your inclination to oblige me.

You tell me you will believe my testimony against the opinion of the world, and surely your generosity must rejoice in the power of rescuing innocence from undeserved obloquy."

"My lord, my life, dispose of me in every other instance as you please, but, indeed, I never can assume courage to brave the censures I should incur; and I must add, since you so strongly urge me, that I know my feeble efforts would only overwhelm myself without rescuing Paulina. Opinion is so strongly against her, and I am considered as so entirely devoted to your will, that even for your sake I must be firm, nor give the world cause to say you required from me a sacrifice which my principles condemned. Do not again look at me with displeasure, but ask Lady Paulina why she makes such a point of my accompanying her?"

Lord Avondel answered as he really thought, "Because she is proud of your friendship, and wishes to give it publicity".

Emily replied, there was a stronger motive, and, on being urged, confessed, that she knew Paulina would be received on no other terms than as her protégée. The sting of a serpent could not have given Lord Avondel more pain than this disclosure. "Answer me," said he, "on your honour, and with that veracity in which I have ever confided; have you either directly or indirectly contributed to draw this odium on your unhappy friend?"

"Never, to my knowledge," said the countess, in the posture of solemn abjuration. "If my feelings have been more strongly painted on my countenance than my will permitted, I have never uttered a syllable, nor intentionally breathed a sigh, which could be

tortured into an indication that I harboured injurious suspicions of your attachment to Paulina."

"I see," said the earl, "from whence these miseries have sprung. Your trembling susceptibility, your ever watchful apprehensiveness, which I have in vain urged you to subdue, have not only ruined my peace, but cast the black tinge of infamy over a most deserving woman. Your utter incapacity of concealing your sentiments should have told you not to cherish any that were inconsistent with candour, or the benevolence you owed a stranger, ignorant only of the fantastical rules which dragons in decorum would establish as the laws of virtue. This stranger, with all the confiding openness of innocence, flew into your arms, courted your protection, and confided to you at once her foibles and her excellencies. I might

enlarge on the tortures I shall ever feel from being suspected of crimes and meannesses which my soul abjures, but pity for Paulina engrosses all my thoughts. I do not accuse you of the premeditated cruelty of determining to sacrifice her fair fame to your defeated vanity, or unreasonable fears; but such is the effect. To a woman of her high sense of honour, a disreputable life is worse than death, and I fear the most *dreadful* consequences when she knows that the friendship you professed for her ends in your abandoning her to the cruel censures of an envious malignant world."

There are wives who, in Lady Aven-del's situation, would have taken the liberty to observe, that people never ought to provoke censure till their feelings are sufficiently blunted to endure it. There are others who might have been tempted to inquire, if coquetry

with the husband and insult to the wife were indubitable signs of a lively friendship? But the solemnity with which Lord Avondel uttered his apprehensions of Paulina's keen sense of disgrace, made the placable Emily forget the tears she had cost her in the anticipation of the future agonies her lofty spirit must endure. Ever disposed to place herself in the situation of others, and to judge of their feelings by the intenseness of her own, she considered how unable she should be to support the consciousness of being suspected, to forfeit that pre-eminent distinction of character which forms the female passport to all the comforts of society ; and though she could not look upon Paulina in the light her Lord did, as possessing talents and virtues of the highest order, but on the contrary, viewed her as deserving some humiliation ; she wished to pre-

vent her feeling the pang of awakening from the dream of deified vanity to endure universal neglect or contempt. She meekly answered her Lord's severe expostulation by intreating him to overlook constitutional faults, and to pardon unintentional errors. "If," continued she, "I can render Lady Paulina any real service, I will not scruple to shew I am grateful for her professions of regard. Let no violent plan be adopted. An excuse may easily be made for my declining to be at the drawing-room, and as her appearance has been so long deferred, surely there will be nothing in postponing it till the general's return. She will by that means escape any public mortification. And as to our intimacy subsiding, let me be thought whimsical or capricious, for I will never intimate to her the real cause. Her husband is expected next

month, and I trust the propriety of her behaviour under his protection will silence every injurious report. Then, my lord, a family intimacy may be renewed, and I need not fear wounding the delicacy of my sovereignised openly patronizing the beauty and talents which so eminently distinguish the wife of your gallant friend."

Avondel could not immediately reply. There was a tenderness and prudence in this plan which rendered unexceptionable; and he felt compelled to admire that firmness which as it was so contrary to her usual character was evidently the result of principle. The conviction of his wife's real superiority to that worthless woman for whom he was so deeply interested, whispered to his conscience, "Blind and unjust Avondel, reverence that meekness which even the keen sensibility of wounded tenderness cannot

violate." Self reproof was a most painful, because ignominious, sensation, to a man who had during his whole life opposed undeviating rectitude and all the splendid qualities of the nobleman ~~ing~~ injustice, selfishness, and ingratitude. At least, he was thoroughly convinced, that he had acted thus, and as far as self-satisfaction goes the persuasion was sufficient. He was now reduced to feel himself blameable, to perceive that he was excelled by a woman, by his wife, even by that well-meaning romantic girl whom he had married because he saw she loved him. To suffer this conscious degradation was mortifying, to own it was impossible. For though no one could more happily conciliate enmity, nor more gracefully forgive a fault, Lord Avondel wanted the magnanimity of a great mind to confess his own backslidings

in private life, and to one too whom he considered as his inferior.

He had now recourse to his memorandums, and finding the committee of the House of Lords met very early, he chided himself for having trifled away an important hour. "If," said he, "in the course of the evening, I should find leisure to call on Paulina, I will advise her to postpone her visit to court. Shall I add, your engagements will not permit you to return her call at present? Is this all, Emily?"

"If, without too much alarming her, you could add, that I most sincerely wish her happy"—

"Though she has made you wretched?"

"No, my Lord; your assurance that all my errors have not deprived me of your attachment, is too recent

for Paulina to terrify me into unhappiness."

"Not if I spend my evening at her house?"

"No, not even then; for I will devote mine to one of your sex whom I love ten thousand times more than you love that engaging woman."

"I understand you," resumed Lord Avondel, retiring with that air of graceful benignity which so well became him. "Kiss the boy for me, and bid him when he commits a fault learn from you how to convert it into an attraction."

Emily's cares and sorrows were suspended by this conversation. She always attributed her lord's reproofs to the kind interest he took in her conduct, and his praises were a constant source of ecstasy, he spoke his full forgiveness with so much complacence and benevolence. Yet she rather won-

dered how he came to think she had been wrong. On reviewing her behaviour with a degree of self-satisfaction which was new to her character, she felt surprised at her own courage, and convinced that she had done what she ought. But people see things through different mediums, and she knew her lord was perfectly satisfied of the rectitude of his own motives. He had again assured her of his fidelity. His regard for Paulina, and the manner in which he defended her character, proved her to be innocent of those gross offences of which Emily was unwilling to accuse her, not so much from a superabundance of candour as from her shuddering reluctance to indulge so treasonable a thought as that her all-perfect husband could really be a perjured adulterer. She was however glad that he now knew the world thought less highly of his goddess than he did,

and she rejoiced in the firmness which had relieved her from the espionage of a woman who, under the occasional mask of rectitude and winning grace, concealed a most malignant temper and impetuous passions. Yet more, she inferred from her lord's compliment to her talent at conciliation that she might in time vanquish the spells of her fascinating rival, and restore his attention and his heart to those public and private duties to which his life had been so honourably devoted.

But, like an evil genius, Paulina was busily employed in counteracting the benign influence of innocence and sweetness. She received Lord Avondel's intimation, that it was impossible for Emily to accompany her to court, with that sort of meek resignation which denoted grief rather than resentment at the abandonment of a favourite design. "I am a forlorn stran-

ger," said she, "without the countenance of a husband, and denied the protection of a friend. Had vanity been my motive, I should have deserved a disappointment; but I was impelled by a desire of paying homage to the virtues of your queen. Yet I will not censure those restrictions by which etiquette deems it expedient to guard the throne from unhallowed approach. I am not known in England. In Florence, 'tis true—But no more of Florence. I know my gentle Emilia would have complied with your wishes, but for some secret reasons of which her discretion is the properest judge."

Paulina's habit of rapidly assuming opposite characters, and of indicating by change of tone and look contrary passions, had given her such a command of countenance, that even the penetrating Avondel saw nothing in this speech but conscious rectitude

calmly submitting to an undeserved slight. He had enough of the old knight-errant in his nature to make him prompt in his endeavours to befriend a sufferer of this description; and though he could with consummate address, manage camps and penetrate into the designs of courts, he felt, as heroes often feel, so disconcerted by a woman, that he knew not in what terms to communicate Lady Avondel's resolution to decline her acquaintance. With somewhat like the hesitation of a recluse collegian, who seeks the patronage of a great lady to his first work, he mentioned Emily's wishes for Paulina's happiness, but he had no sooner got to regret at her not being at leisure to call, than the penetrating Italian saw by his embarrassment, and the formality of the introduction, what was to follow. She had indeed despised the young countess for the timidity

which had prevailed upon her to keep up an intercourse only productive of pain, and wondered whether her forbearance had proceeded from fear or blindness. But though prepared for the intelligence, the channel through which it was conveyed alarmed and surprised her. From what point blew the wind when a wife had such power over her husband as to make him assent to the propriety of her jealous scruples, and bear a message which declared in opposition to his *known* opinions, that she would not countenance imprudence and effrontery? Had Emily's feeble charms snatched from her a heart which flattery, artifice, taste, wit, talent, celebrity, and superior beauty, had so hardly subdued? Could passive submission be the mighty enchantress who had dissolved so many potent spells? She would be more passive, more submissive, and look and

•
speak with more consummate meekness. She knew how to act the wife, as well as the mistress, of Anthony. She could adjust her veil, fold her drapery, close her hands on her bosom, cast down her eyes, and utter nothing but the sigh of resignation, in imitation of the patient Octavia.

“I understand you, my Lord,” said she, when she had so arranged her features as to invite his scrutinizing glances. “No further explanation is necessary. The claims of domestic harmony are most paramount obligations, and in you I surrender my only English friend. Yet, perhaps my still dear Emilia, your happy wife, pitying my forlorn situation, may allow me to receive your written advice, provided our correspondence be submitted to her unerring delicacy.”

“Charming Paulina,” returned the earl, “your susceptibility hurries you

into extremes. I shall not desert the honour with which you have invested me of being your protector, till I consign you to the care of Monthermer."

No allusion could be more ungrateful to Paulina than the return of her husband, and that Avondel could name it with indifference, nay even allude to it as an exoneration from the trust she had reposed in him, was madness. She needed all her powers of deception to conceal her real agony.

"If I appointed you to the trust," said she, with faltering emotion, "it is now my duty to liberate you. Noblest of men, I could say dearest too, farewell. I will not interrupt the harmony of your wedded life. The lovely Emilia's wishes ought to regulate your intimacies. Yet, perhaps that goodness which is an innate in your bosom, that pity for an alien dishonoured and abandoned in your, shall I say

inhospitable, clime? O no! England gave you birth and by that cancelled all my wrongs."

"Surely," interrupted the earl, "you forget yourself when you use such a superflux of adjurations instead of commanding my services."

"My lord, I remember but too well; the honour of a British nobleman must not be committed by his taking a lively interest in the disgrace of a reputed — Presiding powers, who watch over delicacy, cannot I even name the accusation which has stabbed my fame! I only meant to ask, if there is any impropriety in requesting that your lovely child may sometimes visit me. He resembles you. It is not on that account I beg to see him, I want no memento of your features, no remembrance of your worth, but my little Sydney doats upon him, and if denied his sight will

be as wretched as his mother. Will Emilia object to this, I mean will she be *taught* to object, for candour and tenderness *were* her characteristics? It is now my first wish that the boys who bear your name might consider each other as brothers."

Avondel desired Paulina would be calm, and promised to bring the child next morning.

"Bring him!" exclaimed she, "O be not rash. Consider your own character, and the promises you have made to his apprehensive mother."

"Neither of which," said he in a stern tone, "will be endangered by my visiting a woman of sense and honour. And surely, Lady Paulina, you cannot suppose, that you can ever forfeit my friendship while you are conscious you deserve it."

"Repeat that assurance," answered she, anxious to discover that Lady

Avondel had, in addition to her own renunciation of her acquaintance, prevailed on her husband to promise that he would abandon her, as she knew she could soon counteract so mean and impotent a restriction. "My hurried spirits," she continued, "have perhaps made me hear you incorrectly. Has Emilia's superlative generosity left you indeed at liberty to act as you wish? And tell me too candidly and clearly, am I generally considered as absolutely infamous, or acquitted of all offences except indiscretion?"

"English ladies," returned the Earl, "are not accustomed to prescribe their husband's friends, or to limit their conduct within interdicted bounds. I should be sorry to be an exception to general custom. And believe me, Lady Paulina, infamy never has yet been associated with your name, nor shall it while I have a voice to assert

your innocence, or an arm to avenge your wrongs."

Paulina wrung his hand with hurried emotion, and called him the generous image of divine compassion. "I am not then," said she, "as I feared, the vilified outcast of society, whom every one might insult with impunity? The great and good Avondel is my protector still. He, ever wise and noble, knows how to reconcile the claims of his own honour with the pity due to a stranger; and though the fastidious apprehensiveness of conjugal affection has robbed me of the jewel which, next to conscious innocence, I most value, an unspotted character, I will not complain. Your desert sanctifies the extravagancies of jealousy. Yet must I fear lest your goodness to me should wound your poor Emilia's peace. If it should again

induce her so pathetically to complain that she has lost your heart."

"You are mistaken, Lady Paulina, Emily never did, nor will complain."

"Not complain! O pardon me in this. What think you could have prepared me to bear this sudden breach of friendship with composure, but the discovery of her abhorrence of me? The events on my birth-day certainly afforded an ample scope for detraction. Recollect, my Lord, the song bemoaning your unkindness which made the whole circle weep. Her manner too of receiving their condoling applause! Sweet gentle soul! I verily believe it was a sudden impulse inspired perhaps by your too unguarded admiration of me."

Lord Avondel reminded her that he left the party after her part was concluded, and desired her to inform him

how the words of the song allotted to Lady Avondel could be construed into a reference to their domestic situation? After some pretended regret that she had thus disclosed what he was unacquainted with, Paulina recollected Emily's song, described her look, the plaintive tremulousness of her voice, the raptures of Norbury, the whispers of the company, and all those circumstances which, though they did not fire the earl with jealousy, made him severely condemn his wife for imprudence and duplicity. How could she so solemnly protest that she had never breathed a sigh or uttered a complaint tending to confirm the general prejudice against Paulina? Had she not, with marked indifference to the usual forms of good breeding, cast aside the appointed song, and introduced a ditty to which she knew the world

would give the identical reference it was so much her duty to withhold from its notice? Was this the patient wife, throwing the decent veil of concealment over her partner's errors? No: it was revenge, obtruding itself on pity, under the disguise of meekness: and was a woman who could act thus, and then have the meanness to deny what she had done, to be gratified by his sacrificing the friendship of such a noble being as Paulina, whose fame now depended on his steady countenance? "No, Lady Avondel," said he to himself, as he retired from his Italian enamorata, "pique not yourself upon that delicacy which from your education and character is rather a habit than a virtue, till you practise those other branches of purity, veracity and sincerity. I feel myself bound in honour to protect the object

of your narrow jealousy from your cruel insinuations, and to leave you to create troubles, since you are mean enough to seek for consolation for imaginary wrongs at the expense of your friend's fame."

The gossips of the day were too busy to permit it to be long a secret that the ladies never stopped at each others door, nor ever appeared at the same evening parties. Lord Avondel's visits to Paulina continued notorious, and those who wished to perform supererogatory acts of politeness included the earl and his fair friend in the same invitation. Some said they were made for each other, some regretted "aught should part the matchless pair," yet in spite of the influence and dignity of his character, and the attractions and celebrity of hers, the respectable part of society imitated

Lady Glenvorne, and refused to countenance a connection no longer sanctioned by the tacit acquiescence of the wife, and to the blamable tendency of which her rayless eyes and pallid cheeks bore indubitable testimony.

CHAP. XXIV.

Her nature,* is all goodness to abuse,
 And causeless crimes continually to frame;
 With which she guiltless persons may accense,
 And steal away the crown of their good name;
 Ne ever Knight so bold, ne ever Dame
 So chaste and loyal liv'd, but she would strive
 With forged cause them falsely to defame;
 Ne ever thing so well was done alive
 But she with blame would blot, and of due praise
 deprive.

SPENCER.

THE death of Sir Walter Mandeville, which happened about this period, gave Lady Avondel a fair pretence for secluding herself from evening parties, and only seeing a few friends in a morning. She thus es-

* Slander.

caped the pain of publicly enduring the neglect of her Lord, and the admiration of Norbury. The society of Lady Glenvorne was her chief consolation. That respectable woman, from her knowledge of the human mind, was able to reassure her gentle friend's self-accusing diffidence, and in some small degree to assuage the poignancy of her sorrow, without laying bare the incurable wound her affectionate heart had received. She talked of their mutually revered Selina, of the calm peaceful old age which promised to reward the patience with which she had sustained her early trials; how universally her own character was respected, and the increasing numbers who declined Paulina's acquaintance. She repeated interesting narratives of the ultimate success that has often crowned the efforts of virtuous wives, to recall the affections of their truant

lords. She spoke of the pure delights which the maternal character affords, and the endearing consolations which result from the affectionate attachment of a deserving son, tenderly solicitous to repay the debt of kindness which his helpless infancy incurred. Proud of her son the marquis, his amiable qualities gave peculiar animation to this part of her conversation, but with laudable delicacy she avoided his name; not daring to trust herself on a subject which would probably discover her unsubdued regret, that the coronet of Glenvorne was not enriched with a pearl which the capricious possessor disregarded, nay abandoned, for a worthless bead. She knew enough of human frailty to be cautious of exposing virtue to needless trials, and as, contrary to the modern standard of principle, she conceived the bond of marriage to be only dissoluble

by death, she thought it would be imprudent to encourage an injured and afflicted wife to contrast a deserving faithful lover with a cruel if not perjured husband.

With similar delicacy, the young marquis carefully avoided the woman who still kept possession of his heart. In surrendering Emily to the "lord of her bosom's love," he fancied her future happiness was insured, and though his attachment was sincere, it was not so violent as to overpower generosity, or to make him wish that the fair one whom he esteemed and loved had been prevailed upon to prefer indifference with him to felicity with another. But now that he found his own desires had been sacrificed without procuring her the desired good, when he beheld Emily returning indifference with inviolable attachment, and opposing neglect with no

other sign of feeling but silence and tears, his estimation of her value rose to that height that he feared to contemplate her, lest so interesting an object should awaken sentiments fatal to his own peace of mind, and which might also aggravate, instead of alleviating, her woes. For was he authorised to call Avondel to account for his absurd and culpable preference of Lady Paulina? or could he take such a step without injuring the fame of the lovely sufferer? If weeping gentleness failed in its endeavours to revive the withering plant of love, would the storms of expostulation prove beneficial? In how few instances is conjugal infelicity lessened by the mediation of friends? In how many cases are petulance and caprice changed into confirmed aversion by injudicious though perhaps well-meant interference.

Lord Avondel's high deference for

public opinion was well known, and the Glenvornes believed that the eclat which attended Paulina had rendered him more vulnerable to her blandishments; they therefore hoped that if the meteor's splendors were involved in mist, the same weakness which had seduced him might serve to recall him to the contemplation of love's chaste star. With this view, they exerted themselves to diminish the consequence of the bewitching Italian, absolutely refusing to be seen in any circle she frequented, or, if they met by accident, adopting that cold proud civility with which even effrontery cannot long contend. Fashion and fame are alike mutable in their favours, and generally immolate their former idols on the shrine of some new divinity. Paulina discovered, that as she had owed much of her celebrity to novelty, her popularity was decreased by a host of imi-

tators, who, though in their style of acting they "marred her greatness," by dividing public attention, obscured her fame. Numbers too who had not that solid judgment which distinguished the Glenvornes, endeavoured to outgo them in the loudness of their censures, and took exceptions against the general style of her impromptus as well as against the freedom of her manners and the looseness of her attire. These condemned her not merely as a vain, artful, treacherous coquette, but as a woman who outraged every law of virtue, and abandoned herself to general licentiousness. It was inferred from various suspicious circumstances that she would be as ready to act the Bona-roba with Norbury, as the Lady Baronness with Avondel, and like Pope's Psyche, whether she addressed a Mounseer, a Signor, or a Mynheer,

always replied in the language of assent.

Paulina had not yet proceeded so far down the declivity of vice as to avoid feeling shocked at these undeserved imputations, which were become too public to escape her penetration. Yet, when we consider that she was so far infatuated by her passion for Lord Avondel, and elated by her triumph over his supposed invulnerable heart, as to contemplate the death of his countess from neglect, and her own adulterous connection, with complacency, as the means of dissolving her own marriage and uniting her to her paramour, we must not wonder at any degree of licentiousness of which she might hereafter be guilty. Nor was slander so very erroneous in judging that the seeds of that effrontery, which could glory in the notoriety of an indecorum, and that cruelty which

could exult in the misery of innocence; would in time produce a prolific crop of profligacy. Nor do I hesitate to pronounce the venal wanton, chaste in comparison of her, who, unseduced by any temptation but her own passions, indulged, till they became inordinate, pauses on the abyss of vice, calculates what advantages may result from the infamy which she is going to incur, palters with the devil, and strikes a bargain of worldly advantage against that dreadful hazard of eternal punishment which pre-concerted guilt ever braves. For, be it remembered, adultery is a premeditated crime. The inclination to offend must often be subdued before it is indulged; the plan of seduction and deceit must be arranged, methodized, suspended, and resumed. The husband must be blinded, the monitor removed, the assignation formed, and the attendants cor-

rupted, before the culprits can find it convenient to consummate their guilt. But women of Paulina's stamp seldom extend their views beyond the things that are temporal; and amid all the characters which she assumed, and all the virtues which she affected, she was too much a stranger to its feelings to attempt that of religion.

Her method of parrying public odium was not by pretending to correct her conduct, but by more openly displaying her superiority. She considered envy as the source of much of the sarcasm and insult which she now experienced, and perhaps she was not erroneous in this conclusion. The doors of so many houses of fashion were now shut against her, that she could no longer preserve that nice selection of society which only admitted high ton and literary celebrity on her visiting list. She was even glad to

leave a card as Lady Caddy's, and to be enrolled in the duchess of Stingingwell's coterie. Nor let the reader start at ladies of such *correct* character admitting so suspicious a member into their hallowed precincts. The world had talked so much of the earl of Avondel and his fair friend, that the duchess declared it was a duty she owed to society to observe this woman's manners herself. Her ranks had been rather thinned by a recent importation of Irish officers, who had carried off some of her well-jointed widows and rich spinsters. It became necessary for her grace to recruit her numbers, and long experience had told her none made such admirable inquisitors as those who knew by experience the active properties of scandal.

Here then, and at Lady Caddy's, the degraded Paulina exerted her musical and histrionic powers; here poured

forth the soul of song, displayed the commanding graces, and spoke the glowing ebullitions of genius which had charmed the refined connoisseurs of an enlightened nation. She now filled up the vacuums of frivolity, and assisted the labours of repletion. She was heard after the lie of the day had been circulated, and relieved the universal yawn incident to a dearth of intrigue. The company whom Sir Joseph Caddy's turtle had assembled, stared at her exhibitions, pronounced them monstrously good, wondered at the lady's memory, lost half she said, and misunderstood the rest; and her ladyship's friends hoped that Electua or Angelica would not take much time, as the evening hardly allowed more than five rubbers. In compliance with that gregarious code of social laws which fashion had then just promulgated, and which has since been ho-

noured by universal obedience, the mistresses of these respective mansions, glad of every thing which drew a crowd to their houses, courted Paulina's company ; and though she was too refined to afford them any real amusement, their guests flocked to the spot which gave them an opportunity of saying, they had seen the Italian lady whom every body talked about. The duchess and Lady Caddy were indeed women of too great virtue to defend her conduct. Her grace boldly submitted it to the scalping knives of her friends the moment the rattle of Paulina's wheels announced her to be out of hearing, and enjoyed the dissection of her new friend's reputation in silence, till she thought the lagging vigour of the operators wanted the refreshment of her own pungent salts. As to Lady Caddy, she constantly protested, that if

there were any thing actually wrong between Lord Avondel and Lady Paulina, she neither would nor could defend it; which observation I think amounted to saying, that if vice were vice, she would not try to make it virtue, which in these times certainly is going a great way towards veracity. Each of these ladies could justly affirm, that their houses never had been polluted by meetings between the criminals, for one especial reason. Fallen as the earl was, he was still, like Milton's Beelzebub, "majestic though in ruin." Nor did "this pillar of state, in whose grave aspect deliberation sat, and public care, and whose look drew audience and attention still as night," condescend to frequent less respectable circles than those in which he was accustomed to move. It was only when he had engagements of which Paulina was forbidden to partake that she es-

caped from reflection, and gratified the cravings of inordinate vanity by that meagre food which the wonder of ignorance afforded to one whose exertions had used to command admiration and enrapture taste.

About this time Lady Glenvorne received an unexpected visit from Lady Selina Delamore, of whom, though long unmentioned, I have not lost sight. The rumours of Emily's unhappiness and declining health had penetrated the retreat of Lime Grove, and more severely tried the resignation of the pious recluse than all her own sorrows. She was tempted to ask, why does artless innocence suffer, and why does vice prosper? or to determine hastily to step forward, vindicate her injured niece, and expose her tormenters. Her clear comprehension of those divine promises contained in the sacred volume, which was her daily

study, and her obedience to the precepts it enjoined, soon taught her in this, as in every former trial, to turn her eyes to him who knows what is best for us during our mortal pilgrimage; and her knowledge of Lord Avondel's disposition convinced her, that unless the most enlightened wisdom and commanding influence guided the conduct of the mediatrix, Emily's sorrows could not be alleviated by her interference. And would sympathy relieve them? Would she be better able to support the loss of her lord's affection by having wept on the bosom of her maternal friend, and told her how inestimably she valued the heart of which she had been artfully deprived? She knew Lady Glenvorne would be attentive and compassionate, but one suggestion struck her mind, would she also be a monitress? It was possible Emily might be faulty, might

have committed some error which tended to excuse Lord Avondel, and the reformation of which might restore his truant love. She trusted to the discernment and explicitness of the Marchioness, and it was with the view of knowing her sentiments that she resolved to visit her, without informing her niece that she was in London till she knew whether seeing her could answer any good purpose, to counteract the certain ill of exasperating the earl, and drawing from her that full avowal of wretchedness which in griefs of her peculiar kind rather aggravates than cures.

Lady Selina listened with pleasure to the marchioness's assurances, that no blame attached to the amiable countess, whose only fault consisted in that extreme susceptibility which results from acute feelings instead of unbridled passions, and calls for for-

bearance and protecting fortitude as duties that firm intrepid man owes to his weak and gentle helpmate, and which Emily certainly might boast her husband shewed her till the subtle Italian "benetted him round" with snares. Her punctual adherence to her aunt's advice, of concealing her unhappiness, was proved by Lady Glenvorne's declaring, that though she was the only friend who had any pretension to her confidence, not a word to her lord's disadvantage ever escaped her lips. "The accounts of Paulina's mortifications, which (said the marchioness) I could not help having a pleasure in communicating, seem to give her satisfaction, for human nature could not be indifferent on such an occasion; but she only presses my hand with a look of gratitude, dries her eyes, begs me not to go too far, and starts some other subject. I trust,

however, that as she grows somewhat more cheerful, she also cherishes the hope that this high-minded man cannot long submit to patronize infamy. I think she suffers more from considering his degradation than from a sense of her own wrongs."

Lady Glenvorne now delicately suggested to her friend the possibility, that her once all-powerful influence might counteract the abandoned Paulina's, and asked her if she could support an interview with the earl. The calm and elevated Selina shuddered at the proposal. "If it could dissolve an illicit connection," said she, "if it could snatch the beloved Avondel from a life of guilt, and restore him to his injured wife, my own feelings should not prevent me from making a dreadful disclosure, which must convince him of the extensive unexpected consequences." Here she paused,

clasped her hands, and uttered a fervent petition for divine support and direction.

“My indignation,” resumed Lady Glenvorne, “has, I perceive, transported me too far in my censures of a connection which blasts the chaste love of our dearest Emily. Highly reprehensible as I consider the earl to be, in withdrawing his affections from his wife, and publicly devoting his attention to a married woman of, to use the softest terms, suspicious principles and doubtful fame; weak and scandalous as I hold it in him to declare himself bound in honour to be her protector, while he deserts those whom God and nature call him to cherish and support; though I deem that friendship a sin which virtually breaks the preference prescribed by marriage, and that degree of flirtation, mental adultery, which withdraws the

heart from those to whom it is pledged by solemn vows ; I still believe, that, by an absurd sophistry unworthy his understanding and principles, Avondel is self-satisfied, and thinks his behaviour justifiable, which he could not do if he had really committed the grosser crime. So innate are his principles of honour, that I know he would then feel degraded, and though he is practised in life's subtle maze he has too much ingenuousness to know himself to be a villain without being humbled at his own shame."

Lady Selina answered, that in these circumstances she knew her interference would be of no avail. She observed it was difficult to convince a criminal of his faults, while through a perversion of the understanding conscience acted as an advocate instead of an accuser. The false generosity of supporting what he esteemed slander-

ed innocence, might obviate every plea she could urge. The expected arrival of General Monthermer would tend to develop Paulina's character, and nothing could so soon detach Avondel from her as those violent measures, which it was probable her unbridled passions might suggest. As it was impossible for Lady Selina to remain tranquil at Lime-Grove while the Avondels continued in this distressing state, she consented to adopt Lady Glen-vorne's plan, of residing in London incognito, where the marchioness might give her daily information.

The wily Paulina perceived, that of all the arts she had used to detach the earl from his wife none had been so successful as seeming to fasten on her the crime of duplicity. With the censoriousness common to a depraved character, which generally judges from its corrupt inclinations, she once ex-

pected to find some indiscretion which might have subjected the countess to the suspicion of a criminal amour—but so blameless was her behaviour, that it seemed as easy to charge her with high treason as with a thought that militated against her wedded faith. Norbury indeed was ready to second her aims, by boldly proclaiming himself the lover and the champion of the most lovely and most injured of her sex ; but as the object of his vows, secluded in her own deserted mansion, never sparkled in the horizon of fashion, he could not even be *seen* pouring his vows into her cold and listless ear. It was impossible therefore for Lord Avondel to justify his actions by recriminating censures on his wife, whom, while he admitted her to be perfectly virtuous, he despised as a mean-spirited woman, concealing much

duplicity and petty art under the mask of ingenuousness.

But human nature in its best shape is so remote from perfection that Paulina thought it would be useful to confirm the earl's hatred by some new discovery of his wife's unworthiness, lest, when his indignation at her exposing him for a cruel husband subsided, he should ask himself if he were justified in abandoning her for one fault? Lady Caddy's early intimacy with the Mandeville family promised to open a fair field on which penetration and invention might work under the direction of malevolence. Though no two human beings were ever more unlike than the elegant high-spirited Italian and the mean vulgar English woman, a violent friendship was formed between them, by the adhesive properties of mutual accommodation and mutual hatred to Lady Avondel, whom

Paulina detested as the wife of her beloved, and Lady Caddy as the means of preventing her from entrapping Sir Walter Mandeville. For strongly as she loved her dear Sir Joseph she was so attached to Mandeville Castle, that the death of its possessor could not divert her affectionate regard from what she thought would have been as well disposed of in a jointure as in swelling the rent-roll of the Avondels. Now, though a woman of Lady Caddy's virtue must, as I have before observed, hate all naughty proceedings, and though she entirely wiped her hands of countenancing the *affair* between the Lady Paulina and the earl, if there were any thing in it (which indeed she doubted, never having seen them together) she saw no harm in visiting the suspected lady, having observed that the countenance and conversation of a woman of virtue

had sometimes preserved a backsliding sister from utter destruction. And really if there ever were two contemporary Lucretias, and had they met to abuse the Tarquins of the day, their conversation could not have been more correct than that of these inimitable friends, who talked over every real and suspected faux-pas and crim-con of the past and present age with such shuddering horror, that it was wonderful their health was not injured. Paulina in particular turned up her eyes and sighed out her hopes, that she should never fall into such terrible disgrace, with so much pathos, that Lady Caddy became convinced she was purity personified.

"I had no conception," said Paulina one morning to her dear friend, "that the morals of English women were so very corrupt. Indeed, they exceed us Italians in depravity; for though the manners of our country

give a greater licence, and sanction those intimacies and attachments between the different sexes which (I have cause to lament) subject women in this country to undeserved reproach, yet actual guilt is so rare with us that a family is thought degraded which ranks one abandoned woman among its females. Really, my dearest Caddy, I think, like the great men of the East, your nobles wear the horn as a symbol of honour. But let me correct myself, the Mandevilles, Delamores, and Avondels, are exceptions. You have said nothing against them, so I conclude all their spinsters were Dianas and their matrons Faunas."

Lady Caddy shook her head.

"Mercy!" exclaimed Paulina; "this is too shocking, but you are a friend to these families and I will not urge you to disclose their secrets."

“You will not breathe a syllable to Lord Avondel?”

“Certainly not. Lord Avondel and I have so much to say on other subjects relative to our respective studies, the climates and scenes we have visited, and the present state of the European courts—Indeed, I see so little of Lord Avondel except when he has the goodness to escort me abroad, for you know, we foreigners always expect a *cicisbeo*, that I could not find an opportunity of talking to him about his own or his lady’s relations. My dearest Caddy, how odd it is in you to think I dare take such a liberty with Lord Avondel.”

Lady Caddy then, like another Pandora, raised the lid of her box, and out flew secrets innumerable. The earl’s attachment to Lady Selina Delamore, the separation of that lady’s father and mother, for no good certainly,

though she never heard the particulars; the eccentricity and extravagance of Lady Honoria Mandeville, the mysterious conclusion of Lord Avondel's first engagement, and the retirement of the lady, were all detailed under solemn injunctions of secrecy. For as the earl had lately been very gracious to Sir Joseph, either for reasons of state, or in gratitude for the countenance he afforded to his friend, her ladyship would not for the universe have offended his lordship or diminished her hope of one day seeing his name in *her* visiting list. Lady Paulina promised on her honour not to repeat what had been told her, and though, as Touchstone observes, "~~an~~ oath is not binding when we swear by what we have not," she scrupulously kept her word by carefully concealing the intelligence till she had cast it into such a shape, that even Lady Cadd

could not have recognized it as her own communication.

The next day, when they were alone, Paulina carefully fastened the door of the anti-room, and renewed the attack in whispers. "I have scarcely rested, my good friend," said she, "since you communicated to me this most extraordinary occurrence. You say Lord Avondel really was attached to that equivocal Selina?"

"O most deeply! Every body knows that whatever he may now pretend, he never will feel such a regard for any other."

Paulina coloured deeper than her rouge, but suppressed her vexation at this mortifying assurance, and went on to ask, if no blame, no malevolent whispers, were attached to his character on this occasion? Lady Caddy was courtly enough to answer, that he was above reproach. Paulina observed,

there must have been some motive for Selina's retirement; and with fresh assurances of secrecy urged her friend to be communicative. "Why," said Lady Caddy, with important gravity, "if you will be very reserved,—I do remember when I was a little child playing about the room that I heard Mrs. Caudle tell my mother she had suspected something a great while."

"Dreadful," exclaimed Paulina; "visible proofs of indiscretion?"

"I conclude so, and I think they said something of a captain who was seen to leave the family with whom she resided at a very early hour."

"Does Lord Avondel know this report?"

"He did not for many years I am sure, for he went abroad inconsolable; but I suspect he has discovered something since his marriage, for I find he

has forbidden his wife to have any intercourse with her aunt."

"Her aunt?" returned Paulina with a sarcastic smile, and eyes fixed on her companion's face. "Are you not convinced that she is her mother?"

Lady Caddy started, owned she was set upon thinking if it were possible. Lady Honoria Mandeville was one of the most wayward creatures in the world. She concluded with saying, "she certainly had a daughter."

"True," answered Paulina, but infants sometimes die, and to conceal a sister's disgrace—"

"I do recollect," said Lady Caddy, "the little girl was taken ill while Sir James was out of England; and the neighbourhood said, if she died, it would be through the mother's neglect and mismanagement, and that her husband, who doated on this child, never would forgive her. But really, I

always thought she lived and is now Lady Avondel."

"Pray, my dearest friend, did this happen just at the time of Selina's disappearing?"

"No, it was afterwards."

"Just as I expected. Was any intercourse kept up between Selina and her relations after her retirement?"

"She never came to Mandeville Castle while Sir James lived. Lady Honoria survived him, and when she lay dying, Selina came and took the children."

"The girl you mean?"

"No, both; but she gave up the boy to General Mandeville."

"And became doatingly fond of the girl?"

"Yes, educated and idolized her."

"And at last contrived to marry her to her own duped degraded lover!"

"You have opened a new world to

me, Lady Paulina. I do really think what you hint at is possible."

"Possible! my worthy friend: how much has your candour hoodwinked your penetration not to have suspected that their attachment was too remarkable for aunt and niece. But 'tis ever thus with great minds, and if sagacity were not impeded by the unsuspicious tendency of general benevolence, it would be impossible for vicious characters to support themselves in the world. You must allow me to reprove you for the only fault I have ever seen in you, it is excess of charity. You are too apt to think people as worthy as yourself."

Lady Caddy had no idea that she was thus credulously kind, and promised to amend what she owned was a great error. "On reflecting on this subject," said she, "I do think Lady Honoria's real daughter certainly died,

for three physicians were sent for, and five apothecaries sat up in succession. There was such fear lest Sir James should hear of it, and when the child got better it was all hushed up."

Paulina now inquired into the nature of the disorder, and finding it was the small pox declared no father could know a child after the ravages of that disease. "Is it not surprising," said she, "that the pretended heiress of of Mandeville Castle bears no vestige of that distemper?"

Lady Caddy paused a few moments, and then exclaimed, "The changeling has no right to Mandeville Castle."

"None, unquestionably," answered Paulina. "If the fraud should be discovered, the wealthy heiress will be reduced to the worth of her real father's commission." The scrupulous justice of Lady Caddy now discovered, that it would be doing an honourable

action to make a journey into Devonshire, and try what might be picked up from old servants, adding, that she could not bear to think, that eight thousand a year was thrown into an indirect line by knavery and imposition."

"For the sake of the noble Avondel," replied Paulina, "let this business remain an unexplored mystery. —Remember we are only suggesting probabilities, not ascertaining facts. The Mandeville property is in the possession of one who will render it a public blessing, and by what you have told me of your English world, his title is as good as that of most of his contemporaries. Unhappy man! He is sufficiently afflicted with a wayward wife. It would be cruel to deprive him of her fortune while the incumbrance remains unalienable. See how the example of your confidence has betrayed

my prudence. You are the first to whom I ever divulged my regret at Lord Avondel's domestic wretchedness."

Intrusted with secrets and surmises of such consequence, Lady Caddy returned home to ruminate, and soon changed the possible into the probable; and again metamorphosed what was likely into what was true. She drove to Lady Paulina's next morning, and on her road thither met with fresh confirmation, for to the eye of slander as well as to that of jealousy, trifles afford clear evidence of facts.

"My admirable friend," said she, out of breath, "are you quite alone? O I am so impatient: all you told me yesterday is fact."

"Pardon me," replied Paulina, "the communication was yours: I only drew inferences from the facts you stated."

"No matter," returned Lady Caddy, "which of us made the discovery; tis all very true. The creature is in London, the very Selina Delamore. I am confident I have seen her. It is not a trifle which has brought her from Lime Grove. There is some plot, some diabolical mischief about securing Castle Mandeville."

Much as Paulina depended on her own power over Lord Avondel, she felt alarmed at the idea of having her influence disputed by a woman of whose attractions and abilities she had conceived as much apprehension as she underrated the passive charms of Emily; and she listened with trepidation to Lady Caddy's account, that she had met her in the Park that morning in Lady Glenvorne's carriage. The marchioness was known to patronise the injured countess, and no doubt she

had brought Selina to London to advise and comfort Emily.

"'Tis really shocking," said Paulina, endeavouring to conceal her dismay, "to what lengths an abandoned woman, who is careless of what she knows to be a ruined character, will go. I understood you that Lord Avondel forbade all intercourse between his countess and this creature?"

"Unquestionably he did, and I am amazed the marchioness should have the impertinence to advise the breach of his orders. I was bowing to her as we passed, when the wind blew aside the blind, and I saw who was her companion. I could not be mistaken, for I was using my opera glass, having observed Lady Glenvorne generally wears very becoming morning bonnets."

Paulina agreed with her friend, that such interference in family affairs must

not be connived at, and Lady Caddy was deputed to discover the present abode and habits of the incognita. She soon returned laden with full particulars and positive proof of the marchioness's connivance at the rebellion of Emily and Lady Selina. The mine being thus fully prepared, Paulina commenced her attack on the earl of Avondel.

CHAP. XXV.

We are too delicate,
 And when we grasp the happiness we wish,
 We think it wit to argue it away :
 A plainer man would not feel half your pains,
 But some have too much wisdom to be happy.

YOUNG.

POSSESSED of proofs of actual disobedience, and such suspicions of spurious birth as would unsettle a mind delicate even to fastidiousness, Paulina hoped to eradicate from Lord Avondel's heart every remaining sentiment of esteem for his unfortunate wife. She took care that at his next visit he should

surprise her in tears. Unlike the majority of her sex, Paulina had recourse to this mode of attack only on extraordinary occasions, and by the rareness of its use made the manœuvre irresistible; and at the same time impressed her infatuated lover with a high idea of her fortitude, as contrasted with the undesigning and artless, but too frequent sorrows of Emily.

These unusual signs of distress alarmed Avondel. He inquired if it proceeded from the illness of her son? She answered her Sydney was well, but she was in so melancholy an humour, that she doubted whether any event which secured him from feeling the sure attendants of protracted life ought to afflict her. "I allude," said she, "not to physical but moral ills. 'Tis weakness and folly to complain of the common infirmities of disease, the inclemency of the seasons, or the vi-

cissitudes of fate and fortune. But there are miseries which the generous heart is most prone to feel, against which wisdom, valour, virtue, every distinguishing quality of the mind, every acquired accomplishment"—Here she turned her eyes on the earl, and then averting them with a sort of agonized compassion, exclaimed, "O my friend, I have heard such a tale, but I dare not trust my own prudence and plighted confidence. Let me intreat you to leave me lest I betray myself and make you wretched."

The earl answered with great firmness, that among the duties of that sacred character with which she had honoured him, one was not to leave her when she appeared to want advice or consolation. "Nor am I," said he, "rendered so callous by the reiterated wounds of disappointment and sorrow as to be insensible of the impend-

ing evil which you seem to intimate now points at me."

"And you have really suffered, really endured the pangs of blasted hope and undeserved affliction? God-like man! Every interview discloses new excellencies. This is the first time I have ever heard you complain of the injustice of fortune. By the serenity and constant elevation of your mind, I should have characterized you as dignified Content reposing on the lap of Prosperity."

To make a compliment palatable, we should aim at discovering what the complimented wishes to be thought, rather than what he really is. As Lord Avondel preserved in public a lofty reserve respecting his own expectations, he was not aware that he so far relaxed in private that scarcely a day passed without his permitting himself to unbosom his wrongs and disap-

pointments to his confidential friends. But as he piqued himself on the character of patient magnanimity, and despised that of an habitual grumbler, he did not, while listening to Paulina's eulogy, recollect that ill-founded praise is biting satire.

"My inestimable friend," said he, apparently intoxicated with the sweet beverage his Circe had prepared with so much skill, "the world in its best point of view affords little to gratify a refined and intelligent mind, especially if its early visions were devoted to the contemplation of imaginary perfection." The deep sigh which accompanied this remark, though it proved Emily's incapacity to realize the romantic dreams of his youthful fancy, told Paulina the unwelcome truth, that all her blandishments and all her graces had not obliterated the indelible impression of Selina's pure

and sublime attractions. The indignant feelings of offended vanity and disappointed love renewed her courage, and she resolved to supplant her rival or lose him for ever.

“ My dearest Avondel,” said she, in a tone of soft compassion, “ I have heard the story of your early love. Your wrongs and woes are of such a nature that you only could feel, you only pardon ; and since I find you know what I was unwilling to communicate, I must say that I revere your magnanimity in forgiving that unhappy woman so far as to allow her to reside near her daughter.”

Avondel's eyes shot fire. Pale as death, and trembling with horror, in a sepulchral tone he exclaimed, “ Unhappy woman ! Daughter ! Whom—what do you mean ?”

“ What have I said ?” answered Paulina. “ Have I made any discov-

very? Do you not know that Lady Selina Delamore lives in——street, where your wife visits her with Lady Glenvorne?"

"What daughter?" inquired the agonized earl, stamping with anguish.

"My wife is Selina's niece."

"O yes, certainly her niece. The world calls her so. Dearest Avondel, how you terrify me by this extravagance. I begin to fear I have tortured you by disclosing something you were not apprized of."

"I am calm," answered Lord Avondel. "Do you know any thing to disprove the fact of Emily's being the daughter of Sir James Mandeville by Lady Honoria?"

"What can a stranger know on such a subject? Do not let a mistaken appellation, hastily uttered, convey such suspicions to your mind. Your wife inherits the Mandeville fortunes. She

was brought up as the child of that family. Absurd suggestion ! Why should you suppose her the child of Selina ?”

Till Paulina suggested it, Avondel never had formed such a conjecture. It now shot across his brain like a barbed arrow. He saw it in the shape of a terrific vision too horrible to be defined. Sinking into gloomy silence he shuddered at the recollection of some circumstances which told him it *might* be true. O, worse than death ! O state more dolorous than the turbulent fantasies of real distraction ! To survive the destruction of all those comforts which untainted honour and conscious rectitude could confirm ! Selina must have had some reason for her conduct to him, some motive for her concealment, some imperative cause which still condemned her to silence. She confessed she had, and that the discovery would make him wretch-

ed. Wretched indeed! He had adored a strumpet, and married the offspring of that illicit amour which had doomed his youth to despair and mortification. Did he hold the ample possessions of the Mandeville and Delamore families by a spurious title, to the injury of the lawful inheritors? If wealth and justice were incompatible, the former had no attractions in his eye. He would doff the purloined robe of opulence, and return to that honourable poverty which bred no secret reproaches to taunt an upright mind. Yes, he would again be the poor earl of Avondel, and educate his son to gain his subsistence by his sword, rather than suffer him to profit by the crimes of his actual progenitors. Was he then to publish Emily's disgrace? His reflections took another turn. Was it probable, or indeed possible, that the Mandevilles should knowingly

adopt the base issue of a relative of Lady Honoria's, a woman whose folly and extravagance they ever condemned? They must have been cheated by the introduction of a supposititious child. But had Honoria the weakness thus to injure her own offspring? Had Selina the art and baseness to conduct such a fraud? He recalled to his mind's eye the undefaced impression of her countenance, so mild and ingenuous, so replete with purity and disinterestedness. Could he connect the idea of a wanton and a swindler with those features? A fresh thought suggested itself to his mind; might not Paulina be artful and malicious? I can no otherwise account for this suspicion not ripening into conviction, than from his raising his eyes to look at her features, when seeing beauty in its most fascinating form fixed in contemplating his emotion and weeping for

his distress, he afforded another instance of the lamentable truth, that "the wisest heads and noble hearts," when duped by female artifice, betray as much folly and criminality as inferior minds, who, in their more frequent deviations from rectitude, do not so much shock our moral feelings, as those who we know must do violence to their natures when they renounce the obligations of duty.

Paulina suffered Avondel to ruminate, till she saw his scrutinizing glances fixed on her face, and then called in the assistance of language to confirm the powerful artillery of her eyes. She grasped his hand, intreated his forgiveness; "but," said she, "if you are so merciful, I never shall forgive myself for the torture my indiscretion has given you. Is it possible? I will not ask you in this moment of your surprise and anger, but

will you in future endeavour to acquit me of any base motive? My tongue should have rested in eternal silence, had I not thought from your owning yourself unhappy, that you had heard these distressing rumours."

Lord Avondel listened no longer, but bade her tell him, what distressing rumours she meant.

"I shall wound your delicacy, my lord, and shock my own; but I have gone too far to be reserved *now*. The cause of Selina's sudden retirement is too clearly ascertained; her matronly friends perceived its necessity. It is very true Lady Mandeville had a daughter born about that time, but there is, I fear, too positive proof that this child died in her infancy, through the mother's negligence. She was then living on very ill terms with her husband; he was absent; he adored this child: it was necessary therefore that

its loss should be supplied. The rest I own is all inference and conjecture, founded on a visit which Selina made to her sister, and her extraordinary fondness for your Emilia. It may be a malevolent conclusion; of this at least Selina must be acquitted, your marriage with the ostensible heiress of the Mandevilles is not to be ascribed to her influence."

The young countess's evil genius at this moment suggested to the earl's mind her innocent acknowledgment, that it was her aunt who first taught her to love him, and the playful confession of bridal tenderness was now tortured by the brain-sick nobleman, into another proof of a diabolical plot to disgrace him, and secure an honourable establishment in marriage for the base-born foundling she had surreptitiously foisted into an illustrious family. Thus was his whole life ren-

dered miserable; thus was infamy entailed on his posterity, by one he had contemplated as the paragon of perfection.

Again his soul recoiled from this conclusion. On what was it founded? An unauthenticated tale, perhaps invented by some malignant gossip, and repeated by a woman, faultless indeed as far as respected himself; but were he Monthermer, could he place any confidence in her fidelity and veracity? Yet she was a foreigner, and too much a stranger to the respective families to fabricate this story. Some rumours must be afloat. Oh! the soul-harrowing thought, that there must be whispers of such a tendency! With a stern aspect, he bade Paulina give up her informer.

"It is my intention to do so," answered the false Italian, "but not till your agitation has so far subsided, as to convince me you will do nothing

rash, nothing that will endanger your own reputation, or the rights of your child. I will only at present tell you, that my friend is most sincerely yours, and thinks you ought to be quiescent, unless the nearest male heirs of the Mandevilles notice these rumours, and probably they are so remote, and their rights so dubious, that their claims never can be adjusted, even if Lady Avondel's—"

"I have no business, Madam, with the rights of others. It will be sufficient for me to defend what are truly my own, or to resign what upon investigation appears to be indefensible, without being exposed to the disgrace of an iniquitous contest."

"Oh! ever true to rectitude and truth!" said Paulina, with energetic warmth, "my informant will act, or be passive, as you require. If you wish for testimony, the servants in

the family and the medical attendants may be questioned."

"I shall take the management of this business into my own hands," returned the earl, rising, "my heart's first wish is to escape from a world in which I have lived too long."

"To privacy or to death would you go?" said Paulina, detaining him; "in either state I will be your attendant. I will minister to your undeserved sorrows, and if they wholly weigh down your mind, I will escape with you to the world of spirits, and follow the friend of my soul through every change of his future existence."

"Paulina, think of your stronger ties."

"And have you no ties, Avondel? If you are at liberty to rescind yours, have not I the same freedom? Our husband and wife may console each other. Monthermer will not be brok-

en-hearted ; he will find some passive, gentle, willing fair one, with a mind as vapid as his own. Our dear boys, indeed, will lament us ; those whom we hoped to inspire with all the lofty energies of virtue, with scorn of deceit, with firmness to bear the sports of fortune—”

“ You talk vaguely.”

“ Surely not so vaguely as Avondel, the patriot, the statesman, the hero, the hope of his country, the admiration of Europe, who has lived too long, because deceived and tormented by two base and foolish women. Yet, if an infant boy cannot bind you to existence, what can I urge ; I who have so recently offended you ? Shall I call you my life, my protector, my only guardian and friend ? My lord, you must not go till you have heard an oath which may arrest your rash-

ness. Whatever are your resolves, your fate shall be mine."

"Pity my distress, and do not aggravate it," said Avondel, hiding his face with the decorum of a dying Cæsar, unwilling to shew his manly features while distorted by agonizing grief.

"'Tis I," said Paulina, almost terrified by the success of her devices, "that have made you thus wretched."

"No," said the earl, somewhat recovering his fortitude, "it was kind in you not to let me be the only ignorant person. But no more; start some other subject, wide as the antipodes. Have you tried your new harp? He paused a moment, but ere she could waken the vibrating chords, he started, and asked her if the rumour were generally credited?"

Desirous to unravel part of her web of mischief, Paulina owned it was

merely a cautious whisper, which, if managed with prudence, might soon die away. "It seems," continued she, "revived by Lady Selina's re-appearance, and the only measure I should recommend, would be insisting on her leaving London."

In the more irritating suspicion of his wife's disgraceful birth, Lord Avondel had lost sight of this positive act of disobedience, which he determined to notice with due severity. Tossed in the whirl of contending passions, he had yet the judgment to perceive that the sympathy of his dear and excellent friend aggravated his distress. Affecting, therefore, a composure which he did not feel, he assured her that his principles and character would preserve both his conduct and person from any act of hasty frenzy, and with cordial assurances of forgiveness, and even of gratitude for

her last proof of friendship, he hastened to a home which had long been distasteful and was now terrible.

Paulina's malice could not have fixed upon a day which was more likely to give effect to her diabolical contrivances. It was the second anniversary of Lord Avondel's marriage, and as the common decencies of life required that it should be celebrated like the first, on pain of having all the gossips in London know what a painful alteration one year had made, he had felt himself obliged to make that a festival which, even previously to his visit to Paulina, he considered as a day of humiliation. A large dinner party had been invited, and Emily, supported by her friend the marchioness, endeavoured, in the recollection of the sentiments with which she had once welcomed that morning, to forget her present feelings. The earl, on his

part, was called upon to play the happy husband at the moment that his heart execrated the connubial tie, and he was to preserve his reputation as the elegant host and best bred man in Europe, while he hated the whole world except Paulina, whom, notwithstanding an intimation that such an occasional attention would be grateful to him, the countess had omitted in her invitations.

He once determined to plead indisposition and retire to his chamber, but remembering that this would fix the object he most wished to avoid by his bed-side, and expose him to the torture of her solicitations, and to the impertinence of medical attendance, he resolved not to have recourse to this plea, unless as an excuse for negligence and abstraction after the ladies had retired. Disdaining to be disconcerted by women, Lord Avondel en-

tered the drawing-room with all the conscious dignity of his lofty sex, feeling like Othello the hardness of dissimulation. He received the common-place compliments of his friends with civility. Emily advanced to meet him with all the timid loveliness of apprehensive tenderness. "On these occasions," said he, "we do well to revive the old baronial customs. In gratitude for the honour Lady Avondel did me, I must to day appear solely hers." The enraptured countess pressed his offered hand with fond affection, He led her to the dining table, placed himself by her side, and deputed his chaplain to act as host. The debüt was admirable. Emily felt the vivacity she before affected. Avondel took his wine rapidly, and with hurried conviviality exerted himself to amuse and occupy the attention of his guests.

All would have glided off smoothly.

but for the presence of a character which never fails to excite disturbance in the glossy surface of fashionable society. This was a Mr. Frankly, a plain Devonshire esquire, who knew nothing of the world, uttered all he thought, and never took the trouble of inquiring into the connections and private histories of the company he frequented, and thus became remarkable, and I may add terrible, for saying every thing that should not have been named, without excepting the praises of the political rival of his host, or the infidelity of the gallant of his hostess. Mr. Frankly first probed Lord Avondel's festering wounds, by observing the striking resemblance of the countess to Lady Selina, whom he had seen at Mandeville Castle, and thought her the greatest beauty of her age. He then scared the returning rose from Emily's cheeks by remarking,

that he had heard his old school-fellow, General Monthermer, had married a Florentine lady, who was the most extraordinary person ever known, rich, beautiful, witty, and accomplished. He found she was a friend of this family, wished he had met her, and appealed to Lady Avondel to say if she was indeed so dangerously captivating. Nothing could have been easier or more correct than to have said "Yes," but Emily was dumb. An emotion like being choaked induced the earl to order a glass of water. She thanked him with her eyes, and Lady Glenvorne endeavoured to relieve her by telling the *native*, that ladies never decided on each other's beauty. "Well then," said Frankly, "I'll appeal to the gentlemen. Come, my lord, give us your opinion." "Which is entirely in her favour," returned the earl, carelessly, "and I

propose Lady Paulina Monthermer to you as a zest to a glass of champagne."

The joyous Frankly rubbed his hands, called for a bumper, and declared himself delighted with his friend's good fortune.

"I find he is expected in England so soon," said Frankly, "that I will stay in London till he comes, and judge for myself of this wonderful creature." Emily asked, when the general was expected? Frankly answered, that he had heard from Falmouth that the Indiamen were beating about the mouth of the channel. He then expatiated on the uneasiness an affectionate wife must endure whilst her husband was exposed to the conflicting elements; but the inaptitude of this remark as applied to Paulina had such an effect upon the company, that the pain of restraining their risible muscles in due decorum was even

visible to Frankly, who looked round with astonishment, perceiving something was wrong, but unable to guess what he could have said that was so covertly comical. Lady Glenvorne, pitying the countess's ill concealed agitation, complained of the heat of the room, and the ladies withdrew. Frankly started up in admiration, followed Emily with his eyes, and then exclaimed, "Never was such a resemblance! just her height, look, manner. I have rarely seen a daughter so like a mother."

"Daughter! Mother!" Lord Avondel felt these cabalistical words revive the slumbering scorpions which lacerated his heart. He looked round to see if his friends understood that they had a latent meaning, and, like most unhappy people who practise physiognomy in such circumstances, explained the embarrassment into

which his evident agitation had thrown his guests into a corroboration that his shame was public. "Mr. Frankly," said he, with that petrifying look which would have silenced most men, "your memory may have failed you. It is many years since you have seen the lady you allude to." He turned to address a person who sat opposite, but Frankly was invincible. "No, my lord," said he, "by the merest accident I discovered Lady Selina walking in the park this morning very early. I should not have known her but from her voice. Perhaps your lordship may remember it was the most melodious that ever was heard. She was talking to a lame-soldier whom she had relieved. I made myself known to her, and told her I was coming to dine here. We talked you all over. I find she lives in town, to be near her dear child, I suppose."

The earl answered, "You were infinitely fortunate," and continued to avert his face from Frankly, secretly resolving to add preservation from talkative rustics among his deprecatory petitions.

The company soon dispersed. Avondel ordered a separate apartment, complained of indisposition arising from fatigue, and prohibited intrusion. He neither obtained nor courted repose. His pillow was too visibly covered with thorns to invite him to recline his aching head, and his desire of privacy solely arose from his wishing to have leisure to ruminate on what course he should adopt. It was plain Selina was in London; so far Paulina's evidence was correct. It was probable a clandestine intercourse was kept up between Emily and her aunt. Suppose he charged his countess with the fact? The timid mean-spirited woman

would deny it, as she had done complaining of his indifference and cruelty, and thus only add to her own littleness without giving him any information. What if he braved his own indignant feelings, and forced himself to see Selina, and extort from her a full confession of his injuries? She had stood firmly against his solemn intreaties, yet she had said enough by confessing he would be wretched when all was known. Fatal prediction, uttered with the precision of conscious guilt! It must be as Paulina suggested, as the world suggested. The endearing recollections of his early admiration bade him avoid the fallen criminal Selina. No, though her voice might still retain its corporeal music, the yell of the furies would not be so petrifying as to listen to the strains of heaven dictated by a diabolical mind.

Thus was the name of Avondel united to infamy. Thus had he given birth to a child heir to the disgrace of its mother, and the circumscribed fortunes of its ill-fated father. Yet, again, had not this boy a natural, if not a legal right to the Delamore inheritance, or was that also forfeited by Selina's incontinence? He determined to inspect the writings of the respective families, and to dispatch a confidential friend into Devonshire, and till the discovery was clearly ascertained, consider himself rather as the steward than the representative of his wife's reputed ancestors. Should imposition be made out, his duty would be plain, to surrender the estates to their rightful owners, to allow his wife a separate maintenance, and retire to the continent with his son, whom he would educate to bear his hard fortunes. But while his soul

remained tortured with suspense, he resolved to avoid the presence of the unhappy being to whom he was so unequally yoked.

CHAP. XXVI.

I never did an action of such shame,
I followed what I blush to look upon;
My very hairs do mutiny, for the white
Reprove the brown for rashness—
I have offended reputation,
A most unnoble swerving.

SHAKESPEARE.

EARLY in the morning Lord Avondel received a note from Paulina.

“I have,” said she, “all night endured tortures worse than stemming the fiery stream of Phlegethon. I have heard, that after nobly struggling with your miseries, your anguish affected your health, and you retired

severely indisposed. Lives my Avondel? O the cruel interdiction of narrow suspicion, gross in its ideas, while affecting purity. I am forbidden from watching by your couch, lulling you to sleep with my voice, or pressing your burning temples with my hands. Alas! that she only is denied to minister to your woes who can enter into all the refined sensations of wounded honour. Generous Avondel! write to me but two sentences,—that you live, and that you forgive the inadvertent zeal which rashly drew aside the veil that concealed your disgraces from yourself. The miseries which I suffer on my own account will overwhelm me with despair, unless you intimate that you sympathize in the agonies of her who trembles at the near prospect of being claimed as the wife of Monthermer.”

Absorbed in meditation of his own

disgraces and wrongs, Lord Avondel had lately thought of Paulina only as she had been the messenger of evil tidings, and was more inclined to scrutinize the veracity of her testimony than to conjecture the probable consequences of the general's return to England. He had seen instances of the violence of her passions, and dreading their effect, should his negligence urge her to despair, he determined to pay her one more visit, though rather with sentiments of compassion and subdued resentment, than of admiration, or love.

He found her in the deepest affliction, a dangerous state for a susceptible high-minded man to behold a beautiful insinuating woman, who had art enough to persuade him that he was the cause of her distress. The soul-felt anguish of Avondel was, however, an alleviation rather than

an addition to her sorrows. In the impending arrival of Monthermer she saw the crisis of her fate. Like many other coquettes, she had become entangled in her own snare, and while she proposed to gratify revenge revived the embers of unextinguished love. In proportion as her passion for Avondel increased to warm enthusiasm, her contempt for her husband deepened into aversion, and as her romantic imagination loaded her favourite with virtues, so it enveloped the ill-fated general in vices of which his frank, careless, pliant, yet irritable, disposition was really incapable. With pagan idolatry, and more than pagan barbarity, she deified the winds and waves, calling upon them to whirl the ship which bore this loathsome freight to any other shore, or to in-hume it in the dark abyss rather than disclose to her eyes the offensive and

odious sight of the man she wedded to answer a sinister purpose, and whose affection inspired her with scorn instead of gratitude. The violence of the wind for some days had communicated hopes which can only be termed infernal; but should he escape being dashed upon the rocks which engirt the queen of islands, she determined the moment which ascertained his safety should be that of her flight. Guilt and concealment, or, what she still more abhorred, poverty and disgrace, would be to her far preferable to sitting by his side on one of the golden thrones of India, and ruling prostrate millions with despotic sway. Yet, in a land of strangers, the fugitive consort of a man of high rank would want a protector, and solitude would require a companion. Whom but Avondel could she choose as that guardian as-

sociate? Could he but be induced to elope with her!—Elope! the model of correct principles and virtuous conduct elope! Could she expect that the dignified nobleman, the inflexible patriot, the austere legislator, would soil his high reputation by adultery? cancel his own solemn vows, forget the claims which honour and professed friendship urged on Monthermer's behalf, renounce not only his wife and child but also his right to public esteem, and the eminent station he held in society, to steal away the wife of another, and lurk like a trembling criminal in apprehensive concealment, fearful lest his own servants should betray him?—The deed must be disguised, some softer terms must be used, or the project was impracticable.

Yet, if she looked at her past achievements, did any thing appear

too hard for skill and enterprize like hers? She had made Lord Avondel detest his wife, and execrate the woman he had once adored. Between settled hate, springing from a conviction of ill usage, and open renunciation, there are few intermediate steps. She was aware of the resolution which Avondel's delicacy would induce him to frame, namely, that he would virtually abjure the bond he could not publicly dissolve; and though adulterer had a foul sound it might be disguised by fair appendages. Lawless love might (such are the flexible terms of modern morals) be called justice to an unfortunate being whom his friendship had deprived of peace and fame, and exposed to the vindictive spirit of an uxorious, but jealous and vehement, husband. She placed much confidence in that false honour which prompts a man to protect even the

most infamous of women who can plead that she suffers opprobrium on his account. Then she would only talk of a prudent and temporary retirement, till Abomeleque's fury was blown over, of hours devoted to the most refined and elegant enjoyments, of pure pleasures, of sanctified friendship, of an earthly imitation of the communion of celestial spirits, consisting in perfect love, entire confidence, uninterrupted harmony, the result of the kindred wishes of according minds linked together by the indissoluble tie of chastity and honour, without the needless obligation of legal restraints, and secure from that alienating satiety which results from pallied passions, the general bane of matrimonial happiness. She would talk thus, and trust to the common effect of those passions when excited by opportunity, and released from the re-

stricting fear of shame by the consciousness of having already incurred opprobrium. These she doubted not would soon impel Avondel to a crime which would free her from a detested bond, and then in the eventual death of the meek and virtuous Emily (which she considered as the certain consequence of her lord's disgrace) she might claim from the perverted honour of her paramour that station which, when she was young and innocent, he had refused to her love. This done, if he could not submit to live in England a degraded citizen, her large inheritance on the flowery banks of Arno afforded them an asylum. There her taste and talents might expatiate in a clime fruitful in the beauties of art and nature, and in society more congenial than among antiquated gossips, toad-eaters, and

cormorants, to which she saw she was condemned in England.

Such were Paulina's views, and, lamentable to add, she soon wrought the earl of Avondel to her purpose. With infinite address, she prevailed upon him to acknowledge obligation for having convinced him that he had been degraded by his marriage, and rescuing him from being the unconscious jest of his acquaintance. She spoke of the fatal consequences their friendship had brought upon her renown, and having described the sacrifice in terms which implied she felt its value, she protested with vehement enthusiasm that she would endure an infinitely greater loss for the glory of being the chosen friend of his soul. When she saw her apparently disinterested attachment had moved his sensibility, she ventured to ask, if he thought the Indiaman could have ridden

out the late storms, adding her doubts of Monthermer's safety in terms which spoke more of hope than apprehension. Lord Avondel reproved her with his eye, and nobly expressed his *wish*, that the soldier who had fought his country's battles might for many years repose in her peaceful and happy clime. "I join your wish my lord," said Paulina, recollecting herself, "may he live, but it must be at a distance from me. This hand, devoted to you as a sign of holy friendship, shall never again be given in pledge of the union which my heart renounces. Even a woman's fears confirm a woman's delicacy, and bid me as I tender my life preserve my person from the brutal violence of an enraged sensualist. My enemies will soon tell Monthermer how my fame has been scandalized through the weakness, if not malice, of her whose

name would wound your feelings. O Avondel ! you know not what Monthermer is become since you left India, bloated with excess, the unreflecting slave of tremendous passions. When he learns that I have so deposed myself that the virtuous fly my society, my life will be the immediate sacrifice, for he has been too long the despotic lord of slaves to retain those generous feelings which only in minds like yours withstand the corruption of manners and climes. For your sake, for my child's sake, to preserve him from the contamination of such a father, I feel it my duty to live. Perhaps, too, in pity to Monthermer: the penalties of murder are under your system of police so inevitable, even self-destruction would be better, if there be no other alternative; I might then choose the easiest way of welcoming eternal sleep."

Avondel shuddered. His disturbed mind saw no other expedient but flight, to which Paulina pointed. But she was a stranger, could he decline acting the part of her friend? Her pleading eyes told him he had reduced her to this dilemma,—Was there any harm in his procuring her an obscure residence, or in his acting as her protector till she could be removed to Italy, and placed under the care of her natural guardians? Her flight would be attended with a thousand dangers unless he stretched his succouring arm over the alien who, though almost of princely birth and fortune, was now in a land of strangers and enemies; of enemies originating from his attachment. She read his thoughts, and while he paused dressed up the proposed elopement in that virtue-like garb she so well knew how to fit upon vice, that in a moment of

fatal weakness and blinded judgment Lord Avondel consented to brave the extremes of guilt and woe, by committing a crime far blacker than that for which, on a false accusation, he first began to hate the innocent Emily. I speak of his judgment when reason sat calmly upon her throne; not when warped by the blandishments of artful beauty, or misled by the sophistry of false honour.

Behold, then, the noble, the virtuous, the wise, earl of Avondel alured step by step from the limbo of vanity through the Utopian paradise of Platonic friendship, and the chaotic regions of doubt and anguish till he arrived at that shelving precipice which beetles over the infernal regions of adultery;—a region of darkness with respect to every gleam of real comfort, a region too which may often be termed the land of death! Behold

respectful attachment to him whom he silently condemned.

Burthened with an unwelcome trust, Johnson wished to have his honest but uninformed judgment directed by a more enlightened mind, and with much regret he communicated to the marchioness the suspicions which his lord's extraordinary commission had excited. This order coming at a time when the general was hourly expected, and when the earl so markedly avoided his countess, confirmed all Lady Glenvorne's fears. She consulted Selina, and then advised Johnson to execute his commission immediately, lest it should be delegated to one who would be less faithful to his amiable lady. It was settled that Lady Glenvorne should know all his proceedings, and Johnson set off to prepare a rural Alexandria, where the new Anthony was to sacrifice virtue

and renown, not on the altar of love, but at the shrine of false honour, to which deceit and suspicion had led him a hood-winked worshipper; persuading him it was his duty to shield the infamous though the effort was necessarily combined with a dereliction of those engagements which every law of God and man bade him revere, and though in sharing the fortunes of a faithless wife he only immersed his own fame without raising the profligate from the depths of opprobrium.

It seems extraordinary that the gentle Emily, whose constitutional weakness shrunk at the distant threatening of the tempest, was not annihilated by its near approach. But it often happens, that an apprehensive temper, when combined with a good heart, underrates its own fortitude, and afterwards discovers supports in sor-

row and reliefs in pain of which in anticipating the future it discerned no prospect. She could no longer persuade herself that her lord's virtues and excellencies realized the visions her ardent imagination had painted. Yet affection was still true to its object. She believed she had been much to blame in not trying to be more agreeable, and, like Desdemona, whatever was his usage she still was fixed "to love him dearly." Most gladly would she have commuted the public disgrace which she knew attached to his misconduct for even *cruel* usage to herself in private, could his errors but have been concealed. She wished to share the censures that were pointed at him. She wished the provocations which she had given him were known. Yet, did she really mean to provoke him? Her temper was unhappy, her conversation too puerile to gratify a

man of his refined taste, but how ardent was her wish to please? Paulina with all her powers of enchantment was too vain and dissipated to feel the entire devotion and chaste fidelity of true love.

But the blame which never-dying affection still averted from her lord fell on his guilty companion, who, under the mask of friendship, concealed a settled purpose to make her wretched. She pondered on all her successive wiles, her attempt to awe her by the display of superior talents, to pique her by boasting of Avondel's friendship and munificence, to lull her suspicions asleep by professions of attachment, to betray her into the practice of coquetry, or to draw from her those unmeaning complaints of petty differences which disturb the happiest unions, and which even affectionate wives will sometimes dis-

close in that unrestrained frivolity of confidence which is the blamable part of female friendship. But though encouraged by the avowal of her indifference, or rather dislike, to Monthermer, Emily recollected with satisfaction, that love had acted as an ally to prudence, and that she had compelled malice to have recourse to falsehood, since the putrid exhalations of Acheron might as well have been sought in "the icicle which hangs on Diana's temple" as a word or deed of hers which militated in any sense against the honour or fame of her lord. From this review of her conduct, the mourning countess derived consolation, but was still so far from feeling justified that she only wished the earl would remove the interdiction which prevented her from breaking in upon his retirement, throwing herself at his feet, asking in what she had offended, and suing to

be forgiven. Her pure mind hindered her from suspecting the tissue of falsehoods which had been wrought into a plot to cause this alienation. She feared to disobey his commands of being alone, she would write to ask his pardon. Yet, situated as she was, would not the unnecessary humiliation sound like reproach? Besides, she could hope nothing from the simple productions of her untutored pen. But if her noble husband saw her in all the unrepining softness of profound distress, surely his heart would yearn with pity, and as his recent choice was far from faultless he would forget her infirmities, and once more hold his docile Emily to his heart in the transports of generous reconciliation.

Thus Emily passed a dreadful interval of two days, during which many hearts partook of her anxieties. I speak of the kindred and friends of

those who were embarked with General Monthermer on board the Cavery. She had been seen dismasted, firing guns of distress, unable to bear up into any port, and apparently driving upon the Goodwin-sands, in one of the most tremendous storms ever known. All ideas of her safety were now discarded, and Paulina exulted in the hope that one impediment to her marriage with Avondel was removed without the necessity of a temporary seclusion from the gay world, which, with all her affected preference for retirement, was indeed the haven of her desires. These criminal hopes were soon changed into consternation by receiving an express from the man whom, with all the cruel selfishness of vice, she would willingly have devoted to the deep. His letter stated his almost miraculous preservation from shipwreck by the

intrepidity of the Ramsgate boatmen, near which place the Cavery foundered. It mentioned his impatience for a meeting which he anticipated with all the fond affection of credulous attachment, and lamenting that extreme fatigue rendered a day's repose necessary, it expressed a hope that she would meet him on the road to London, for which place he proposed to set off the next morning.

I will not describe the rage, or repeat the imprecations, of Paulina. Her confidential emissary was immediately dispatched to Berkley-square, and honest Johnson reluctantly conveyed to his Lord a billet inclosing Monthermer's letter. Certain information of the general's safety was the preconcerted signal to draw Avondel from the apartment where, under the pretence of indisposition, he had meditated on the dark colours of his

future life, often determining to abandon Paulina and again feeling unable to break her suares. Her billet was only one line written with a pencil, saying that her servants thought her gone to meet the general; the die was therefore cast, she had thrown herself upon his support and he should be branded with treachery if he refused to follow.

Contrary to his usual practice, Johnson staid in the room while the earl read the letter. The perplexity of his countenance proclaimed a soul which could not bend its lofty feelings to its determined purpose. He attempted to order his carriage, but meeting the reproving eye of his servant he blushed with shame, tore the billet, and sternly bade Johnson not intrude upon his privacies, nor abuse his confidence. The faithful valet withdrew in terrified silence. A

pause of awful suspense ensued. Avondel was heard to pace his chamber with quick irresolute step, and Johnson listened in the vain hope that honour would yet prevail. But the snares of Paulina were wound around him with irresistible force ; the terrible determination appeared inevitable. He rushed out of his house with the impetuosity of irresolute rashness. Johnson gazed on him for a few moments, and then hastened to inform the friendly marchioness that the much dreaded crisis was arrived.

CHAP. XXVII.

It will be pastime passing excellent
If it be husbanded with modesty.

SHAKESPEARE.

AMONG the friends of Lord Glenvorne was a Mr. Sandford, who to prudent conduct and upright intentions united that address which gives success to villany, and those companionable talents of mimicry and playful humour, which often lead their possessors into dissolute society

and serious dilemmas. This happy compound of steadiness and wit pointed him out to Lord Glenvorne as a proper agent to execute the subaltern part of the scheme which the marchioness and Lady Selina had concerted to reclaim the truant earl. Without fully disclosing by what means, the marquis had positively assured the ladies that Paulina should be prevented from meeting Lord Avondel at the place of rendezvous, namely, the cottage provided by Johnson. A spy had been placed on this lady's actions, and as soon as she drove from her house in a chariot and four, without being misled by the pretence that she was going to meet her husband, Mr. Sandford followed the fugitive, and as he expected soon saw her take a road very different from that to Ramsgate. When the distance from London, and the lateness

of the hour, diminished the chance of his meeting with any interruption in his design, he bade his postilions pass her carriage. Having disguised his attendants as Bow-street officers, he mounted them on post-horses, ordered them to stop Paulina as a delinquent escaped from justice, and to charge her with being the run-away shop-woman of a celebrated jeweller, and having committed a robbery on her master. They were then to bring her to a neighbouring inn, where they would find him transformed into a country justice, and acting with all the dignity suitable to his magisterial character.

The terror and rage of Paulina at this interruption are not to be described. For relying on the supposed security of travelling in England, and desirous of secrecy, her retinue consisted of only her woman, and one

male attendant, who did not think it prudent to defend his lady's honesty against the bludgeons of three sturdy fellows, who, besides, sheltered themselves from opposition under the invulnerable shield of the police laws. He left it therefore for her to choose between being committed as a depredator, or detected in a criminal elopement, and after many ineffectual remonstrances and as ineffectual bribes, the haughty Paulina was compelled to submit to be taken into custody and conveyed to the King's Arms at ———— Here, as his worship would not act till morning, she spent the night, glowing with shame, mad with disappointment, and alike exposed to disgrace and danger, whether she aimed at concealment or made a frank discovery.

At an early hour justice Sandford,

so disguised that not a trait of the young man of fashion was visible, took the chair of office, placed his clerk and arranged his statute books and papers with sufficient solemnity to intimidate a native of England, and more than enough to prevent a foreigner even of Paulina's penetration from suspecting there was a trick in these proceedings. The tale of the pretended constable was first heard, who insisted that after the robbery they had traced the culprit to a street in the neighbourhood of Holborn, where she equipped herself in the prepared habiliments of a woman of quality, and with two accomplices, disguised as her maid and footman, hired a chariot, and attempted to fly the kingdom. The stolen property was made to accord with the description of Paulina's ornaments, and the Marquis of Glenvorne, as he furnished the inven-

tory, took particular pleasure in specifying the diamond tiara which she had received from Lord Avondel. The trepidation into which this enumeration threw the proud Italian, would have excited pity from any who did not know how her malicious heart had often gloried in tormenting the tremulous Emily, by displaying the blazing splendor of that magnificent present, and boasting that it was the votive gift of a yet more valuable heart. The marked interposition of retributive justice chilled the soul of Paulina, especially when the pretended magistrate ordered her trunks to be searched, since, though her appearance convinced him that the constable was mistaken, that was the surest way of proving her innocence. The disdainful silence which she had hitherto maintained now yielded to the tone of supplication. Her eyes no longer rolled with con-

tempt on the surrounding auditory—hoping to intimidate them with her scornful glances; their sullen fire was dimmed with tears. Yes, injured Emily, the shameless woman who reproached thy self-accusing gentleness wept, but not like thee through pity or timidity, for another's errors or thy own supposed offences! Hers were tears of anger and terror, the overwhelming emotions of rage, accompanied by remorse but not indicative of reformation.

“I intreat,” said she to Sandford, “if your English laws permit, a private interrogation. I will then convince you that the charge is grossly fallacious.”

“I think,” said Sandford, hesitating with affected terror, “there can be no personal danger, unless she has concealed pistols. She may have a

stiletto however, for I observe she has a foreign accent."

"Please your worship," interrupted the constable, "she passed at the jewellers for an Italian."

"An Italian too," answered Sandford, "I have heard that all the men are assassins and the women prostitutes. Yet I think her countenance is not so very malignant. Give me my horsewhip and I'll venture. Be sure keep within call. Now madam—but pray keep your distance. You are going to be tried by the best laws in the world, the laws of England. In the first place, who and what are you? and what makes you travel by night in a chaise and four in this very suspicious and alarming manner?"

"I presume you are a gentleman?" said Paulina proudly.

His worship adjusted his wig, pulled out his cravat, and with much

awkward consequence, answered, whoever saw him made no doubt of that.

"I will therefore" continued she, "call upon that honour which prompts gentlemen rather to assist than persecute my sex. Release me from this unjust and insulting confinement. I am a lady of rank and fortune, and though I claim your protection as an act of justice be assured I will be grateful for my deliverance."

"Madam," answered Sandford, "you speak very good language, and you are dressed like a gentlewoman, but I have known swindlers who could dupe any magistrate, so your merely telling me that you are a woman of quality will not do unless you give me your name and residence. Offering a bribe to be sure looks as if you were about the court, but then I have known pickpockets do the same. All may be settled, madam, by your permitting

your trunks to be searched, or your fairly telling me whither you are going."

Paulina recollected that she was too much out of the Ramsgate-road to use the pretence that she was going to meet her husband, she therefore added, that she was on her way to her country residence, and being further pressed added the name and situation of the cottage taken by Johnson.

"O, thou abandoned child of darkness," said Sandford! "I'll commit you to Bridewell without mercy. I know that very cottage is taken by a noble earl for his kept mistress."

The self-degraded Paulina felt chilled with horror, conscious that she deserved the severest stigma, yet wounded by the unequivocal terms in which plain spoken rusticity described the connection she had veiled with so many decorous epithets. She soon called effrontery to her aid, and expecting to

overawe her inquisitor, avowed her name and rank, and bade him silence the scurrility of the populace by making it known, that her health required the air of the country, and being a stranger her intimate friend Lord Avondel had the goodness to provide a quiet retreat for her reception.

Sandford was prepared with a formal bow, and all that under-bred ceremoniousness of apology which wounded Paulina's haughty spirit, by assuring her that he never could have guessed at her rank if she had not discovered it, every circumstance being so much against her. With officious freedom he begged her pardon, laughed at the mistake, requested her to honour him with her company to breakfast, hoped she would allow him to escort her to her cottage lest she should meet with any more Bow-street runners, and on her declining his of-

they say abroad men don't mind these ornaments, but in England, from the king to the beggar, they are found so odious that they giye name to a sort of madness."

"Indeed," said Paulina, attempting to swallow her chocolate while choaking with fury.

"Aye, my good madam, and we bestow very hard names on the person who confers them. For princess or laundress, 'tis all the same here. Our laws and customs shew no respect of persons, says John Bull."

"Yet, I think they denounce no actual punishment on the offender?"

"No punishment, madam! Why no modest woman will speak to her, and is not that enough? She is not trusted with the care of her own children, and to a mother that is worse than being hanged, drawn, and quartered. We count an adultrass (espe-

cially if in high life) worse than a thief, for she robs her husband of that peace of mind which can never be restored; her children, even if she does not introduce a surreptitious issue, are deprived by her guilt of their natural claim to maternal tenderness. She robs her kindred of their untainted honour, her friends of the good offices they were entitled to expect, her servants of their livelihood, and the poor of that benevolent support her wealth ought to have afforded them." Sandford found his warmth had betrayed him into a style somewhat too elevated, and added, "so our doctor said in the pulpit last Sunday. Have not I an excellent memory?"

Paulina now found herself really indisposed. She complained of faintness, and Sandford led her to the window. "Ah madam," said he, "I dare say you have a good memory too, and

will never forget setting out at midnight to meet your friend at a cottage, when you was in such ill health ; no, nor the little justice at the King's Arms."

Paulina assured Mr. Sandford she should always remember him.

The Marquis of Glenvorne had directed his friend to keep Paulina in his eye till he received some intelligence of the proceedings of Lord Avondel. His detestation of her vices, and compassion for the deserted countess, would not permit Mr. Sandford to be content with restraint ; nor would he allow the persecuted Paulina to brood alone over the disappointment and surprise of Avondel at her failing in her assignation, or indulge her with leisure to compare her present situation with the picture she had drawn of a voluptuous retirement, and meeting her paramour after he had broken every sacred obligation for her sake.

The noise which this disgraceful seizure must make, and her apprehension that her friend the justice, intoxicated with the honour of serving a great lady, would divulge her name, made her indeed as desirous to keep him with her as he was to stay and enjoy gratifications so suited to his temper, by humbling pride and alarming vice. But as her acuteness made it impossible long to preserve the deception, and as even the enjoyment of a successful project palls in time, as the evening closed in he became as anxious to be released from his mock dignity as Paulina was to escape from her thralldom.



CHAP. XXVIII.

I could a tale unfold whose lightest word
Would harrow up thy soul.

SHAKESPEARE.

THE reader will recollect, that, after a severe struggle, Lord Avondel permitted vice, depravity, and cruelty, disguised under the semblance of honour, to gain the ascendancy. Long indulged habits had rendered Paulina's society necessary to his happiness, and with the common license of offenders

he pleaded the necessity he had created as an excuse for his crime. Yet still, as he left his own house with the intention of abandoning his wife and child, his step was irresolute, and his heart palpitated with a vehemence that marked his innate abhorrence of the part he was going to perform. His son he determined to reclaim, but he sighed when he reflected that he should see Emily no more. The innocent, affectionate, gentle Emily : so he once thought her. The mean-spirited offspring of Selina's guilt, so (though no proof of the accusation had been produced,) he persuaded himself he should henceforth consider her. Even as he hurried along to meet the woman for whom he had consented to tarnish his brilliant reputation, he meditated more on his blasted prospects as a lover, a husband, and a father, than on the transport of possessing the object

of universal admiration. He mounted the carriage which was to convey him to his guilty associate with dissatisfaction instead of ecstasy, and mused on the possibility of acting as a mediator between her and her husband, and restoring her untainted in person and renovated in fame to the grateful conciliated Monthermer.

Perhaps the practicability of his plan seemed less evident as he approached the supposed sphere of her attractions. He alighted at the garden gate with an air of rapture ; inquired if the lady was arrived, and was shewn into a parlour. “ My loveliest dearest friend,” said he, perceiving a female advancing to meet him ; but the imperfect light showed it was not Paulina. A form worn to that sort of ethereal transparency, that the soul seemed ready to burst through its mortal mound, a countenance illuminated by

piety though deeply touched by grief, the well remembered lineaments of consummate beauty, injured, but not annihilated, by sorrow and time; all struck on the soul-harrowing recollection of the guilty Avondel, and he recoiled with horror from a voice whose exquisite music reminded him of the happier days of innocence, hope, and virtuous love. I need not add, that voice was Selina Delamore's, who, as he turned to shun her unexpected presence, bade him stay and hear a sister's woes.

Avondel staggered against the wainscot, his failing knees sunk under their burden. Selina endeavoured to support him. "I am your sister," she repeated. "The mutual guilt of our parents gave me birth, and doomed the prime of our days to anguish. Avondel, you owe all your sorrows to a guilty assignation, to the licentious

passions of our father, and the criminal weakness of my most wretched mother!"

"Selina! Selina!" said the earl, shivering with horror as he grasped her trembling arm, "Is this your long concealed secret?" "This, and no other, so help me heaven," said the devout recluse with lifted eyes, then turning their mild lustre on the earl, she added, "It is a secret which nothing should have torn from me, but the wish to save you from that remorse which my dying mother endured."

"Seek not," said Avondel, "to conceal your own misdeeds by calumniating the dead. Is there no other reason for your concealment, no living proof of *your* frailty?"

"Here are documents to prove my veracity," returned the lady. "The hand-writing of the earl your father, the dying confession of Lady Monto-

lieu. I have long languished under the pressure of slander. Tenderness to those who lie silent in the grave kept me from telling my sad story, when life possessed many attractions. What have the few years which lie between me and the grave now to offer, that I should turn parricide to the reputation of those who gave me being !”

“ My sister ! the daughter of my father !” exclaimed Lord Avondel, gazing on that face, which, when flushed with youthful beauty, warmed his heart with chaste delight. It now possessed a pensive, sublime sweetness, not less attractive to his graver years. Its almost divine intelligence intimated that superior loveliness which imagination ascribes to the inhabitants of better worlds. That face now rested on his shoulder, her clasped hands held his to her throbbing heart, while with cautious tenderness, she often re-

peated, "My dear unhappy brother!"

His eyes then glanced at the papers to which she referred. He recognized the writing of his father, and turned from them with horror. "It was not on light surmises," resumed Lady Selina, "that I resigned *you*. I examined every circumstance. I weighed every testimony written and oral before I yielded, with the prospect of being your wife, every earthly hope and joy. It was with strong reluctance that I consented to sit down the destitute child of shame, the victim, I have already said, of undeserved reproach. But I will not talk of what I suffered. Let me only remember the past as a source of gratitude for that divine support which enabled me to endure."

"My sister!" said the earl, still dwelling on the name which, in all his various reveries, in all his wild con-

jectures to explain Selina's conduct, had never occurred to his thoughts.

"Why did not you plead the claims of nature, and call upon me for protection? Did you not sufficiently know my heart to be convinced I adored your virtues still more than your beauty? I would have shielded your innocence from a misjudging world. You never should have known want or solitary sorrow. We would have lived happy, and united as friends, though disjoined as lovers."

"It would have been a dangerous experiment," answered Selina. "We were too sincerely attached to expect that the warm affection of contracted lovers would soon subside into the temperate kindness of consanguinity. And supposing we had lived with the most guarded purity of thought, we owe much to the opinion of the world. Our attachment was known, and even

divulging the shame of our parents would not have preserved us from suspicion. The law of custom which prohibits dangerous intimacies, is not the vague fluctuating decree of fashion, but the dictate of collective wisdom and confirmed experience, resulting from a thorough knowledge of the human heart; and, trust me, Avondel, few violate this restraint without discovering to their cost, that their temerity has removed one of the best safeguards of honour."

The earl felt the truth of this remark, and heaved a contrite sigh. "Yet," said he, "if you renounced my society, your scanty fortune and friendless situation should have taught you to apply to me for that support my duty and inclination would have alike expedited. Why did you leave me in ignorance of your motives? At times cursing her I ought ever to have

blessed, and bereaved of the poor consolations of mitigating your afflictions, and knowing that you still deserved the heart which even a persuasion of your unworthiness could not liberate."

"I yielded you to your country," returned Selina: "why should I arrest a hero's arm, or fix that heart in the captivity of a hopeless passion which I wished devoted to some worthy and happier woman? As to poverty, none suffered its evils but myself, and I am now convinced it was to me a blessing. It roused me from the torment of reflection, and made me attend to those petty cares from which affluence would have exonerated me. Besides, Avondel, shame and regard for my sister's fame kept me silent. Why should I communicate to another the disgrace that attached to two illustrious families? Why infuse a doubt of the right Lady Honoria Mandeville had to that

fortune from which Lord Montolieu precluded the spurious offspring of his wife, though in pity he concealed his motive? Was I, her child, to proclaim the guilt which an injured husband had consigned to oblivion? Was I to tear her shame from the grave, and divulge even to your tried fidelity what it had been the labour of her life to conceal? What motive was there for this? Would your heart have been set at ease by knowing that your father went to the grave stained by the guilt of seduction? Should I have been less forlorn if restored to the first circles than I was at Lime Grove, where I reared my sister's orphans, and performed some trivial acts of kindness to my indigent neighbours? You, (as I hoped would be the case,) roused by disappointment, devoted your life to the calls of active duty, and in time, renouncing me as one unworthy

your regard, espoused a virtuous and amiable woman. Surely, my lord, those motives could not be wrong which led you to glory and me to peace."

The devout resignation of Selina's sentiments, so remote from enthusiasm, so free from contaminating vanity, or extravagant passion, communicated a portion of her own serenity to Lord Avondel. He was again conversing with the object of his early love. She was still the pure exalted being he had formerly adored. The detestable phantom raised by the conjurations of malice for the vilest purposes had disappeared; no mysterious secrecy, no dubious disgrace, hung over the birth of his wife, who rose upon his imagination in the form of cherub infancy, imbibing the early lessons of virtue from an unspotted and wise preceptress. Absorbed in the pleasure of gazing on his

long-loved, long-lost, angel; enraptured by the sweet music of her voice, charmed by her wisdom, and elevated by her piety, he forgot for some time the circumstances which led to this interview. The recollection too soon flashed upon his mind, and stabbed his heart with the pangs of self-condemnation. He found his Selina the same, or rather affliction had acted upon her as a skilful lapidary on a beautiful gem, and polished her into brighter lustre. But had prosperity been equally kind to him? She was lowly, disinterested, devout, submissive. He had become proud, wayward, fastidious, and discontented. It were well if he could have paused there. What were the views which he had lately cherished? Why was he here? Whom did he expect to meet? Whom had he abandoned in London? Tears of remorse gushed into his eyes. He clasped Se-

lina to his bosom, while an impassioned confession of his own unworthiness burst from his tongue. "O my Selina, my sister!" he continued "let me publicly claim alliance with purity and worth like thine, as an incentive to imitate thy high deservings."

"No," answered the lady, "the reasons which urged me to conceal my story, are still in force. The misdeeds of the dead should remain silent like their mouldering bodies, unless justice to the living compels us to tear from the covert of the grave the crimes of those who can no longer defend or explain their actions. Let us not furnish a tale for vulgar wonder and unmeaning exaggeration. I would have nothing known but that I am restored to your favour, and permitted to witness your happiness with my dearest Emily."

"Selina," said the earl, with a look

of fixed despair, "Emily and I can meet no more!"

"Is it her fault or her misfortune?"

"Both," returned Avondel. "She exposed me to the world as a faithless husband, when I only cherished a pure and allowable friendship." "For whom?" inquired Selina. Avondel blushed, turned aside his head, and answered, "You know the story."

"My brother," answered she, "whether would that friendship have led you? and how has your mind submitted to that sophistry which teaches that a dangerous and unworthy object can excite a pure and allowable passion? Indeed, I know too well the fatal influence to which you have surrendered your better judgment, and it is to oppose that influence that I have made this dreadful discovery, to prove how the indulgence of criminal

appetites may communicate misery to the innocence which is unborn."

Avondel blessed Heaven, and the guardian angel which had saved him from perdition, with a fervency which shewed that his crime had not reached that full consummation which would for ever have exposed him to the horrors of deep remorse. He now lamented, that Selina's interposition had not been sufficiently timely to preserve his honour from the imputations to which an elopement must give rise, and Selina proposed his immediate return to his family as the only method of silencing defamation. Avondel then expressed his fears, that Emily's weakness had already given too much potency to slander for him to restrain its calumnies, and he mentioned the song she had sung on Paulina's birth-day as a libel on his conduct, and a public appeal to pity on her own behalf.

Lady Selina knew the story from the Glenvornes, and suggested to him the possibility that Paulina had contrived the offence which she urged as an unpardonable crime. Disdain and resentment at being thus made the dupe of a woman's mischievous art, which this second instance of the falsehood of Paulina's accusations afforded, gave a pang to his soul, even at the moment that he felt his understanding for ever liberated from those deceptions by which it had been long bewildered, and he was only withheld from restoring transport to his consort's heart and peace to his own, by his natural unwillingness to acknowledge his errors, Selina understood his character, and by dwelling on the conciliating love and gentle humility which were the duties of every wife, and the marked characteristics of his own, convinced him that he would be excused from

those submissions which are often the easiest to those who are most apt to offend.

The jealous dignity of Avondel now prompted him to inquire, what degree of publicity was attached to his elopement, and the means by which his retreat had been discovered? In return he heard the pardonable treachery of Johnson, and was comforted by being assured that only herself, the Glen-vornes, and another gentleman, who was stationed to intercept Paulina, knew of his last determination, for which he could not even plead the excuse of precipitate rashness. "The marchioness," continued Selina, "is now with Emily. If possible she will be kept ignorant of your departure. You have only to resume your former self. Tell her the cloud which threatened destruction to her peace is passed by, and her placable mind will in the

happy future forget every painful recollection."

Again Lord Avondel blessed the prudence which had preserved him from humiliation, as well as from the most criminal acts, and resolved if he could once more regain the proud eminence from which he had fallen, never to expose himself to a temptation which his self-confidence falsely told him the native energy of virtue would enable him to resist. He begged his guardian angel (for so he now called Selina) to accompany him to London; but she urged the advantage of a little delaying her re-appearance, lest the two-fold surprise should overwhelm Emily with excessive rapture. She assured the earl that she had never seen her niece since her marriage, and she suggested the wisdom of preparing her for the event of their re-union, and the world for her

again claiming the rights of untainted fame. By the death of an old servant, he and herself were the only living depositaries of Lady Montolieu's secrets, and she left it to him either to admit the young countess to a participation, or to let her seclusion still remain an unexplained mystery.

Lord Avondel's admiration of Paulina had now changed into abhorrence and disgust; yet he considered himself as bound on the present occasion not to leave her to the violence of her own passions, and he consulted Selina what plan could be pursued to save her from the exposure which she so justly deserved. The same divine principle which had urged the pious recluse to support the backsliding, prompted her to raise the fallen. To her compassion, prudence, and delicacy, the earl committed the task of attempting to reclaim his intended associate in a life

of shame, and separating from his angelic sister with the hope of a speedy and happy re-union, he returned to London, rejoicing that he had escaped from the worst consequences of his folly, anxious to regain domestic tranquillity, and the favourable opinion of the world, without openly acknowledging that he had deserved to incur the loss of them. If it be suggested, that this temper of mind falls far short of the self-abasement of true contrition, which rather seeks pardon from its maker than restoration to the favour of its brother worm, I shall acknowledge the justness of the remark, and say, such was Lord Avondel; and such as he are many who call themselves penitents, who rather feel piqued than grieved by the recollection of their transgressions. These depend solely upon their own strength, upon a more enlightened understanding, or better

regulated passions, to enable them to escape future temptations, without either seeking pardon for the past or grace for the future, from him whose favour confers perfect peace, and whose support insures victory over our spiritual assailants.

In contemplating that change in Lord Avondel's character which had been jointly effected by early disappointment, and a life spent in the turmoil of ambition, Selina felt ample cause to lament his errors, and to increase her own gratitude for receiving the wholesome discipline of difficulty and sorrow. She saw his proud reluctance to acknowledge his offences, even to her whom he avowedly considered as a superior character, and she saw in him also an eagerness to cling to those self-justifications which the conduct of others supplied. Why else did he attach such criminality to the

complaining strains of Emily, even supposing she had selected that pathetic song, and at the same time so easily pardon himself for having by his behaviour instructed the world to make a personal application of a popular ballad? And why did he also blame herself for not interposing in time to preserve his character unblemished, when, from his own justification of his friendship for Paulina, it was evident he would not have believed himself to be walking in the path of danger till he saw the abyss yawn before him? Though free from every taint of vanity, Lady Selina rejoiced at perceiving she had regained her influence over his mind, and she hoped in the calm intercourse of friendship, which now promised to gild their declining days, to communicate gradually (for her knowledge of the human heart discouraged the expectation of sudden

changes) to this idolater of honour, this man of unswerving rectitude, this consummate hero, and accomplished gentleman, that pious humility, and meek resignation, which she had learned while languishing on the bed of pain, or suffering in silence the mental tortures of undeserved reproach, heart-wounding disappointment, and contemptuous neglect. Without the means of solacing her griefs by the reflected pleasures of beneficence, restrained from justifying her fame by her own high sense of duty to her guilty mother and dissipated sister, too independent in her character to solicit from others that pecuniary assistance which, from the circumstances of her birth, she believed she had justly lost, she prayed and suffered for three and twenty years, alternately accused as an abominable branch whom society had justly cast

out as an avaricious worldling, who refused to distribute the hoards her mother had accumulated, and as a capricious, fretful being, whose only affliction was a wretched temper, fostered in moody solitude, till it became utterly irreconcilable with the habits of the world.

No particular malevolence gave birth to these censures. Sorrow had not warped the natural gentleness of her temper; and though her limited circumstances restrained her bounty, her heart overflowed with good-will for every living creature, and the few comforts which she enjoyed resulted from her endeavours to make others happy. Yet, thus it is that the world often treats a character of Selina's stamp, not from enmity, but garrulity. We have, generally speaking, a strong dislike to being kept in the dark, and whenever there is something

mysterious in the conduct of our neighbours, we are apt uncharitably to conclude, that it arises from a disgraceful cause. Hence the success of specious characters; hence the general failure of timidity and unobtrusive worth. Lady Selina lived in what is called a sociable neighbourhood, among the rich and prosperous, with whose habits hers did not accord, and to whose festivities she could contribute no additional zest, except that of stating that they visited a right honourable. Most of them had sailed down the stream of life so smoothly as never to have experienced personal affliction, and as they possessed the philosophical quality (so often called good-nature) of bearing the sorrows of their friends and connections with easy indifference, nothing but the severe visitings of bodily disease, or the failure of the Bank, could have convinced

them that "man is made to mourn." People thus circumstanced, who never voluntarily visit the house of sorrow as a preparatory school for themselves, are firmly persuaded, that every body may if they please be happy, and they entertain the same antipathy to the countenance of melancholy, though illuminated by the seraphic smile of resignation, as Cæsar did to the lean and wrinkled Cassius; for with them unhappy people labour under a threefold ban; they do not contribute to their pleasures, they are apt to ask favours, and they remind them that prosperity is of temporary duration.

In assigning these reasons for Lady Selina's being unpopular, I wish to serve many worthy people, who, to the anguish of untold grief, find the vexation of undeserved opprobrium unexpectedly superinduced; and I would caution those who pique them-

selves on their penetration to be less active in supplying the hiatus which prudence or modesty leaves unfilled. In so doing they often launch into the boundless sea of conjecture, and with no worse motive than a desire to shew their own talents, shape the mist-enveloped character into a demon or a fury. And yet, perhaps among the cares which haunt the sleepless couches of those possessed by that species of sorrow which is compelled to hide its festering wounds, (and how often does delicate sorrow take that shape) none is more tormenting than the consciousness, that though concealment is their duty, reproach uses it as a covert from whence she may shoot those barbed arrows which most severely wound a susceptible ingenuous mind.

CHAP. XXIX.

That soul-expressing eye, benignly bright,
 Where meekness beams ineffable delight,
 That brow, where virtue sits enthron'd serene,
 Each feature forms, and dignifies the scene;
 Still let me listen while her words impart
 The sweet effusions of the blameless heart.

BRATTIE,

THE difficulty of carrying on the drama of deception without exciting the suspicion of an alarmed, offended, and penetrating woman, rendered Mr. Sandford extremely desirous to bring on the catastrophe, and to

decamp before his magisterial dignity should be exposed to the degradation of commitment for a fraud. With a view to expedite his retreat, he dispatched a servant to the cottage, which was but a few miles distant, who soon returned with the information that Lord Avondel had set off for London. The daw then immediately began to cast its peacock's feathers, and depositing his wig, band, surtout, statute-books, and an immense pair of false eye-brows, in the horse-pond, he withdrew from the King's Arms, and appeared on the road to London in a character perfectly opposite to the country justice, I mean a man of fashion.

Paulina had for some hours suspected that her detention was not the effect of mistake, and as soon as her guardian disappeared she found, upon inquiry, that he was as much a stran-

ger as herself, and that the appendages which had so much terrified her as the formularies of office, were merely the implements of disguise, or the mummeries of frolic. To whom could this daring outrage be ascribed? Her own guilty conscience told her it was certainly intended to disappoint her assignation with Lord Avondel. Had he then betrayed her? Every lineament in his character proved that was impossible. Even if Emily had discovered their intrigue, she was unequal to this successful project for counteracting it. Weak, timid, and artless, she could neither plan with dexterity nor execute with energy. This insult must originate with abler heads and firmer hands; and whom could she suspect but her rival Lady Selina Delamore, to whom, with the rancour natural to a corrupted mind, she ascribed all her own vices, exaggerated to

tenfold virulence? For she could as soon have supposed herself a contemplative nun or mortified devotee, as to believe it possible that an ardent attachment to Lord Avondel could subside into the holy fervor of devotion, or change to the calm affection of disinterested friendship. In her estimation, as successful love must rise into idolatry, slighted affection must be perverted into the most deadly, active and interminable hatred. The woman who once held the heart of Avondel could never patiently behold it diverge to another, without making a vigorous struggle to regain the treasure.

But what steps was she now to take? Doubtless, Selina had not done her work by halves. Unquestionably, some dark delusion had spirited away Avondel; and after the publicity which this adventure must acquire,

the cottage could not conceal her from the search of Monthermer? What then should she do? Return to London? What awaited her there? A jealous husband, whose passionate love, combined with a weak understanding, would irritate him to the wildest ebullitions of vindictive rage. The impetuosity of the general's temper certainly justified her fears for her personal safety, which now entirely absorbed her attention, and made her regret rather than repent her having indulged her capricious dislikes and highly culpable attachments to such a height as to resolve on an elopement.

While she debated how she should act, she received a letter superscribed "to the Lady at the King's Arms," and under cover one addressed to herself by her own proper name. The signature stated that it came from a peace-maker, and it contained an offer

of service in the way which would best promote Lady Paulina's real interests. The first suggestion was that it came from an emissary of her husband's, who had discovered her flight. This was followed by a hope that it might be written by an agent of Avondel's. In the first case, escape was impossible, in the last an immediate interview was highly desirable; she therefore ordered that the writer should be admitted. It was no other than Lady Selina herself, who having discovered from the loquacious communications of Mr. Sandford's servant to her own footman, some particulars of his master's frolic, and Lady Paulina's present situation, resolved immediately to visit her, prompted by her native goodness, and a hope that she might be instrumental in changing the criminal agonies of rage, disappointment, and despair, into that

sorrow which terminates in hope and peace.

Conscious that the mutual attachment between her and the earl must be known to Paulina, and consequently might impede the success of her negotiation, she wished at first to conceal her name; but the Italian's piercing eyes, quickened by love and jealousy, soon discovered that the fine ruin on which she gazed, whose benign countenance and graceful manner announced superior qualities, could be no other than the early and indeed only real possessor of Lord Avondel's heart. She viewed her therefore as the person who had defeated all her machinations, and ruined all her dearest hopes; and with a determined infatuation, not uncommon to extreme depravity, she resolved to believe her guilty, or at least capable of all the crimes with which she had slanderously aspersed

her in order to bend the stubborn honour of her paramour, and make him the complete tool of her nefarious purposes.

The contrast which these ladies exhibited was complete in all those points which can shew the effect of different principles on equal degrees of intellect. Paulina employed all the power of her capacious mind to gratify her passions, which by indulgence were become insatiable. Selina had naturally strong feelings, but by the aid of religion they became so subdued that they proved assistants to her in her heaven-ward course, converting what reflection told her was a duty into a pleasure. The former centered all her wishes in self-enjoyment, varied indeed by the different shades which it received from vanity, ambition, or libertine inclinations; but whether she sought love or fame, the applause of

thousands, or the heart of a forbidden object; whether, like Cleopatra by the side of Anthony, presiding at the festival in eastern magnificence, or as Rosamond, immured with her doating Plantagenet in "Woodstock's bower," self-enjoyment was what she ever aimed at. Regardless of others, save as they ministered to the object which she had in view, she heeded not subjecting a high-minded nobleman to the horrors of long remorse, and stripping the man whose virtues and fame she affected to revere, of every appellative but that of her lover.

But as the self-denying Selina had submitted to suffer rather than expose her near connections to disgrace or injury, so it was her consolation during her clouded and perilous pilgrimage, that she had aimed at doing all the good in her power, not only in words but in reality, preferring the

welfare and wishes of others to her own. These different motives of action made the Italian crafty and specious, and the English lady kind and sincere. Both were eminently graceful, but in Paulina's address there was a meretricious splendor, an aim at pleasing, a restless assiduity of fascination, which betrayed a sinister design. Selina's manner discovered that innate benevolence which without courting applause insures affection, by evincing that disinterested and enlarged regard for her fellow creatures which we consider as a marked characteristic of those exalted beings who minister to the designs of Divine Providence.

Though I might extend these reflections to the length of one of Plutarch's parallels, there is only one more point of resemblance and dissimilitude in which I shall consider

these ladies. Each possessed an uncommon share of natural discernment, but in both this quality was considerably affected by the medium through which it viewed others. Paulina, judging from her own bad heart, whenever the motives for any action seemed doubtful, regularly assigned the worst. She had lived among the great and the gay, and as her own propensities led her to prefer shewy qualities to valuable endowments in the choice of her acquaintance, it is not surprising that looking chiefly at frivolity, dissipation, profligacy, and artifice, she considered the world as a stage for guilt, treachery, and selfishness, and as far as her views extended her conclusions were just. But as her pigmy standard was incapable of measuring a soul dilated by conscious rectitude, she denied the existence of those virtues which reproached her own depraved

and perverted talents. She deduced female chastity from two causes, pride, or the absence of temptation. She considered misfortune as implying the want of skill and address; she thought candour synonymous with folly, and if she heard of a good deed which the doer had carefully concealed, she either doubted its having been performed, or suspected that under this studious avoidance of ostentation a mine had been secretly delved to proclaim it to the world, and give the performer the twofold eclat of modesty and munificence. For as all her views were earth-bound she had no conception of looking to "Him who seeth in secret" for her ultimate reward.

Selina's judgment sometimes erred, but it was from excess of candour. As Paulina degraded the best actions from suspicion, so Selina was induced

by charity to think too favourably of the worst. She knew that human nature was fallen and frail, but she recognized in it too many traits of its original purity and exalted destination, to give it those darker hues in which mistaken piety and real depravity equally delight to disguise the "Lord of this lower world," from different motives, I own, but I fear with equally pernicious effects on society. As Lady Selina's religion had no tincture of austerity, so her purity of mind and conduct had not rendered her rigid. She had sustained temptation and endured affliction. The latter, so far as related to herself, she considered solely in a medicinal point of view, tending to correct her natural frailties, and she was ever inclined to make large allowances for those pitiable daughters of prosperity whose days were spent in the giddy vortex of

amusement without one wholesome check to teach consideration. She never called that a crime which could be termed an indiscretion, without violating the essential distinctions of language. She allowed much to infirmity. She often met with error, rarely with such incorrigible vice as alone deserves the name of depravity. She saw much to love and admire in her fellow mortals, much to pity, something to condemn, but, till she saw Paulina, nothing to abhor. And even the recoiling shudder which this wicked woman communicated to her frame, was soon changed for that glow of benevolence which followed the pious wish that some temporal calamity might lead her to repentance.

At their first meeting, Selina courteously expressed her desire to render Paulina such services as would be

likely to secure to her the respectable claims of wife and mother. Paulina bowed : rage gave fire to her eyes, and flushed her cheek. " You have not announced yourself, madam," said she with a haughty air, " and to the offers of a nameless stranger, nothing but general thanks are due, till we know their motive for interesting themselves in our concerns."

Selina answered, it was compassion.

" Compassion !" retorted Paulina. " How vague and contradictory are our motives for pity. Perhaps even now I am inclined to consider that ignorance of the common forms of society which has induced you to trespass on the privacy of a person to whom you are entirely unknown, as a misfortune."

Nothing intimidated by this lofty language, Selina answered, that she

was not unacquainted with the celebrity, talents, and misfortunes, of Lady Paulina Monthermer.

“I own my name and rank,” returned the Italian; “be equally ingenuous, and confess that I am now addressing Lady Selina Delamore.”

“I acknowledge that you are.”

“To whom,” said Paulina, while terror and fury shook her frame, “I owe the obligation of a mock arrest, and a day and night spent in insult and ignominy?”

Selina replied, “you only owe this visit;—proceeding from an earnest wish to rescue you from further shame and sorrow.”

“Admirable!” returned Paulina, “you are then really my guardian saint, sent to snatch me from perdition, and to convert me into a pure peaceful creature like yourself? But as I esteem sincerity to be an indispensable virtue

in the composition either of a woman of the world or a *religieuse*, I have no doubt you will answer all my interrogatories with equal veracity?"

"I will anticipate the questions, Madam, which probably you will first wish to have resolved. Lord Avondel is returned to London, and his disappointment in not meeting you has determined him never more to interfere with the rights of your natural protector. Your reputation is safe in his inviolable secrecy; and believe me, Lady Paulina, I have too deeply felt the force of a strong attachment to betray you. Though much may be surmised, your real intention in leaving London is unknown. It is impossible that general Monthermer can have reached town. Return home before the length of your absence can authorize the suggestions of your enemies, and future correctness of con-

duct often disproves the surmises of scandal."

"If to your unsolicited goodness in acting as my adviser," answered Paulina, "you will add the office of being my vindicator, the eligibility of your scheme will become more manifest. Your ladyship has so long endured the pressure of opprobrium, that you must be an adept in the science of parrying reproach, and mistress of every art which supports self-confidence and eludes positive detection. I know of no name near which I should be more desirous of placing a really tarnished reputation than Lady Selina Delamore's, whose adventures will invite discussion when mine are forgotten."

"I perceive," said Selina, with downcast eyes, "you alike mistake my character and my offers."

"This is extraordinary!" resumed

Paulina, elated at the evident confusion of her rival. "Have I then been misinformed as to the necessity of your retirement, or the nature of that influence which you boast of regaining over Lord Avondel's heart? On connecting the past with the present, can I, madam, ascribe your offers of service to any better impulse than jealousy, or triumphant vanity elated by momentary success."

"You are now in the bloom of beauty, Lady Paulina, and conscious of the powerful influence of your unrivalled charms. You can therefore hardly believe that in a few years you will look with apathy, perhaps with regret, on those pursuits which now engage your chief regard. It is long since I have felt either jealousy or vanity. To Lord Avondel's heart I have now no pretensions. He returns to his wife and I to my retirement."

"Till a convenient season again calls you forth to insult the person, and asperse the fame, of a woman who dares the universe to prove she ever swerved from the laws of virtue. Yet you hallow your slanders under the decent pretext of protecting the conubial rights of your poor injured CHILD."

Paulina looked earnestly at Selina while she emphatically pronounced the last word, but no change of countenance indicated that she understood the dark allusion. She had long been accustomed to call Lady Avondel by that endearing epithet, under the twofold sense of adoption and affection; nor had she the least suspicion that the precaution which she had used to guard her niece from a remote reproach, had given a pretext to malignity to fasten on them both an undeserved aspersion. Wrapped in the

mantle of innocence, she was so far from feeling the point of Paulina's inuendo that she was considering by what means she could allay her rage, without committing the sanctitude of her own principles by seeming to excuse her actions. She admitted the truth of her assertion of personal purity, and called upon her to exercise equal candour, assuring her that she had neither circulated the calumnies, nor projected the insults, of which she complained. She then proceeded to observe, that there were many intermediate degrees between a strict observance of moral decorum and actual criminality. She spoke of manners as the outworks of virtue, and of the danger which must ever attend wandering beyond the bounds that custom prescribed, and she referred a far greater portion of error and frailty

to the surprise of unexpected temptation than to preconcerted guilt and resolute licentiousness. She concluded by assuring Paulina, that she would not only bless the events which had preserved to her the possibility of being reconciled to the world, her husband, and herself, but that through the remainder of her life she would retain such a lively horror of the danger which she had escaped as would lead her to avoid every imprudence, the final consequences of which it was impossible to foresee. "I will no longer irritate you by my presence," added the benevolent Selina, "but with fervent wishes that you may be speedily restored to the invaluable blessings of self esteem, I commit you to the guidance of your own discretion.

"My own thoughts," returned Paulina, "are still my pleasantest

companions. I have been too little accustomed to the freedoms of sententious sarcasm to imitate the moral cant with which you veil the deeds of hatred in the words of kindness."

"Why," inquired Selina, "do you call mine the deeds of hatred?"

"Because I am your enemy," was Paulina's reply. Conscience gave a vehemence to her look and accent which would have appalled a firmness less steadfastly fixed than Selina's, by shewing her that so turbulent a soul would not permit hatred to remain inert and passive. But versed in the consolations of religion she knew the rage of wickedness, like the violence of the tempestuous ocean, had its bounds prescribed. Her heart was more disposed to compassionate those who submitted to the thralldom of malevolence, than to be apprehensive of its effects upon herself. She was

incapable of retorting hatred or scorn, and with eyes swimming in tears she meekly answered, "I know not, Lady Paulina, why you are my enemy, but this avowal would not justify me in becoming yours."

"Know then, that I have injured thee, and let that fire thy apathy to revenge. On what system dost thou act, if not on that of self-defence?"

"I trust my wrongs and sorrows to an abler avenger."

"Then," returned the enraged Italian, "as I suspected, thy virtues are simply refinements in vice, and thy malice is controuled to pierce my heart where it is most vulnerable. But tell thy champion, thy Avondel"—

"I have no earthly champion," replied Lady Selina, "I appeal to the Searcher of hearts. Since you decline all conciliatory offers, Lady Paulina,

I can only remember you in my prayers."

"Or rather in thy imprecations," said Paulina, resisting those emotions of admiration which struggled for predominance.

"No," returned the devout recluse, "I know my imprecations would fall on my own head, and not sway the purposes of a God of Mercy. I am enjoined to forgive those who offend me by One of whom I daily ask forgiveness for my daily offences. I was for years forlorn and abandoned, nor dare I risk the loss of His favour who was then my only Friend!"

Paulina was softened. She felt her own dreadful deprivation in wanting the guardianship on which Selina relied, but it was only a temporary impression. Accustomed to repress every religious feeling, her active fancy soon suggested to her that her

rival acknowledged she had now an earthly as well as an heavenly protector. This was the man she loved, the man whom she had endeavoured to fix as her paramour, at the hazard of every temporal and eternal hope. This recollection gave renewed fierceness to her manner, while she inquired, if she was at liberty to return to the home from which she had been basely inveigled.

“Who,” said Selina, “would oppose so wise, so honourable a measure?”

“The perjured, mean, yet specious, Avondel. You disclaim all knowledge of the plots and counterplots by which my ruin has been achieved. To whom, then, can I ascribe them but to him, who first attempted to corrupt the wife of his friend, and with ten-fold baseness exposed her confi-

dence in his plighted faith to derision and shame."

Selina started at the daring effrontery of Paulina, in accusing an accomplice of the crime in which she was more deeply involved. The malignity which mingled with her rage distorted her features, and described a soul more fiend-like than Selina could believe tenanted so beautiful a form, and she deplored the depravity which contaminated such commanding talents. Fixed, interminable revenge, the sanguinary rancour of the Italian, betrayed by the unguarded frenzy of the woman, flashed in her countenance, whose agonized contortions spoke the workings of two passions striving for mastery, whose full indulgence were incompatible with each other. The horror and consternation of Selina's look recalled Paulina's attention to the nature of the confidence

which she thus unwarily bestowed, and convinced her of the necessity of resuming that external self-command of which she was so consummate a mistress. She burst into tears, conjured Selina not to notice the extravagance of a woman rendered frantic by a contrariety and multiplicity of woes, and she laboured so solicitously to vindicate herself from the suspicion of harbouring any resentment against Lord Avondel, whom she acknowledged to be noble and virtuous, that by over-acting the part of a self-accuser she confirmed instead of dispelling Selina's fears, for the safety of the repentant earl. Thus ended an interview that exposed benevolence to one of those disappointments which so often attend its efforts to do good, and compel it to look for its reward to Him who judges of actions by a surer criterion than success.

CHAP. XXX.

Even thee fair Queen, from thy amazing height

The charms of young Endymion drew,

Weld with thy mantle of concealing night

With all thy greatness and thy coldness too.

LADY WORTLEY MONTAGUE.

WE left Lord Avondel returning to Berkley-square. He meditated on the events which had restored to him the long-lost Selina in a new and interesting character, injured, and amiable, with no impediment either real or imaginary, to his future enjoyment of her society, and to his deriving inestimable advantages from her virtue, wisdom, and piety. His thoughts

sometimes wandered to Paulina with anxiety, but without regret, and with as little of self-reproach as a considerable share of self-esteem, combating a high regard for honour, would permit. He had lost an artful, impetuous, fraudulent, mistress, he had recovered a sincere, steady friend. The calm magnanimity with which she sacrificed her dearest wishes, and justest claims to the advantage or misery of others, extorted his admiration, and his own gentle Emily rose in his opinion as the docile pupil of such an instructress. It was long before he could withdraw his wonder from the living to peruse the documents which so reluctantly discovered the guilt of the dead. With a trembling hand he opened the packet given him by Selina, and first read a billet from his father to Lady Montolieu, which too clearly proved their criminal intercourse. His

attention was next directed to a letter from that unhappy woman. It was addressed to her daughter, and superscribed by a request that she would open it previous to her engaging in the marriage state. As this was the immediate cause of her renunciation of Lord Avondel it is right to present it entire.

“To Lady Selina Delamore.

“Unable to support the burden of existence any longer, I shall soon escape from a world in which my share of anguish has been at least proportioned to the load of my guilt. The vindictive wish of Lord Montolieu when we separated has extended to the confines of the grave. He bequeathed me everlasting remorse—Yet on his death-bed he forgave me. He prayed too for my repentance.—The imprecations of resentment were re-

corded in too indelible a manner to be erased by the relentings of compassion. I never can truly repent. I know I am a guilty, but I feel, too, that I am an injured woman, and my hatred, as everlasting as my remorse, pursues the author of my wrongs.

“Selina, you have been my only comfort, my support in years of misery. I owe to you a full disclosure of circumstances, the knowledge of which, by the death of Lord Montolieu and of my seducer, is now confined to myself and Wilson. But with this confidence I add a solemn adjuration, that you preserve my secret. This is the command of your dying mother. I shall not long survive this injunction.

“There is a dreadful mystery hangs over your birth, which the small provision left you by my husband may perhaps lead the world to suspect.

You are the child of adultery. The subjoined letter points out the name of your father.

“I was married when very young to a man chosen by my parents. Two years after our union Lord Montolieu went abroad in a public character. Till he left me, we had lived in happiness, and I reared his child Honoria with maternal affection. I was not twenty years of age. I was beautiful, gay, and proud of my power of pleasing. At parting Lord Montolieu advised me to live in the country during his absence, but I disliked retirement and abhorred controul. I would have accompanied him abroad, but the nature of his service precluded my attendance.

“I had many admirers during his absence. As I was married before I had experienced the power of my own charms, I resolved to divert myself

with making conquests, and to trifle with the attention I attracted. I fancied my pride, my principles, and my affection for Montolieu, secured me from the danger of breaking my marriage vow. I rejected the advice of some grave relations as cold counsels, and I indulged to excess in amusements and in the enjoyment which adulation afforded. Yet so far from intending to be criminal, I resolved to entertain Montolieu on his return with an enumeration of my triumphs.

“Such was the state of my mind when I heard the earl of Avondel pointed out as an universal lover and successful gallant. He had been married some years to a deserving woman, but who was not possessed of sufficient charms to fix a rover still young and eminently fascinating. I resolved to mortify his vanity by gaining his

affections and eluding his snares. For a time I appeared to be successful in both my aims. He seemed indignant at his captivity, and incensed at the cold-hearted proud coquette whose charms were irresistible, though she wanted gratitude to make her adorer happy. At last he dropped the character of a lover, and became more dangerous as a friend. He pretended to revere the only virtue he had ever found invincible, and expressed some envy of the happy Montolieu, who possessed a treasure which the world could not tear from his grasp.

“Selina, your youth, beauty, and inexperience, may also mark you as the prey of seduction. You are friendless too, and my fears for the child who suffers for my crimes induces me to dwell largely on the story of my undoing. Could you conceive the anguish I have endured, my griefs

would act more powerfully than a thousand dissuasives. O, what strength of nerve, what bodily invulnerability, should she possess, who resolves to infect her soul with the consciousness of a crime so uncontrollable in its contingent effects as mental adultery.

“My seducer now visited me frequently as my friend. Possessed of all those talents which enliven conversation, he affected to think mine an unusual regale. He talked of the tasteless insipidity of common society, of the delights of pure friendship, the charms of taste, and the pleasures of virtue. He grew every day more interesting, and I, pleased with the thought that I had reformed a libertine, and secured a man of superior attainments as my friend, had no apprehensions of his sinister designs. He knew I had a strong passion for

botany, he assisted me in filling a hortus siccus, and with seeming carelessness mentioned a fine collection of plants at his villa a few miles from London. "Lady Avondel," said he, "unhappily has taken a dislike to the spot, which disappoints my intention of frequently visiting what I built and planted as a retreat sacred to contemplation and the Muses. I dare say she would most willingly attend you there; but she has so little relish for the science that she would only hurry you through the conservatories and impede your researches. My gardener is intelligent, and has a systematic catalogue. I would offer to be your Cicerone, dear Lady Montolieu, but that I know your extreme delicacy. However, if you will allow me the honour of attending you, to-morrow is the only day that I have a pre-engagement."

“Of course I declined his company, and determined on the morrow to explore the beauties of this new Eden. But the serpent met me, and I was undone. From that hour I have never known peace, though remorse was not the *immediate* consequence of my fall. I confided in my seducer's honour. The horror of my offence seemed diminished by his superiority to the general mass of successful gallants, and I knew too many who had been ensnared by less powerful temptations to feel the full load of guilt attached to my violated vows. It was not till I found that there would be a living witness of my frailty that I perceived the ruin I had incurred.

“The return of Lord Montolieu at this crisis might have concealed my shame from the world, if I could have consented to purchase impunity at the expense of my legitimate child, and

by the dishonesty of receiving the man I had wronged with the affected tenderness of chaste affection. This I could not do, yet one terror still chained my tongue. Was I to expose my husband and my gallant to the murderous chance of indiscriminate revenge. The dreadful irresolution in which I passed the intermediate months till I became your mother changed my temper and my features so much, that I lost all the charms of sweetness and beauty. I at last became the mother of a living child, born with an unjust claim to half Honoria's patrimony. I resolved whatever was the event to disburden my oppressed conscience. I had lately heard Lord Montolieu affirm, that it was folly in an injured husband to risk his life for a perjured woman, and the composure with which he heard my confession convinced me he sus-

pected my guilt. He bade me never disclose the name of my seducer as he was resolved never to be tempted to revenge. The last act of kindness he shewed me was, endeavouring to conceal my disgrace. He told my friends our tempers were so incompatible that a separation must ensue, and the extreme wretchedness to which I was a prey gave a plausibility to his statement, though some, I fear, from my known levity, suspected my infidelity. He allowed me a separate maintenance, and under the pretence of not depriving me of both my children consigned to my care the infant whom he could not look on without horror, with a solemn injunction that I would not add to my crime by a negligent disregard to its innocent consequence. Our separation was assented to by our nearest relations.

" I never more saw Lord Montolieu,

But on his death-bed he sent me his forgiveness, and careful for my reputation implored mine, that the world might think there had been mutual provocations. It was his love for Honoria which prompted this delicacy. Yet my crime ruined her as well as myself. I saw her often enough to discover that she was a proud, imperious girl, indulged in every wish by a doating father, and tutored to despise a wretched mother, who had indeed forfeited all claim to her duty and love.

“I brooded over my miseries till they overwhelmed my patience. I deserved much chastisement, but surely my tortures have exceeded my fault. You, my unhappy daughter, felt the full weight of my sorrow. You stood before me a perpetual memento of my misdeeds. I hated you as the cause of my alienation from the world in

which I had reigned and revelled, and as a witness of the successful fraud which had deceived my judgment, and foiled my firm resolves. You knew not the motive of that sternness which repelled your fond endearments, and checked your infantine vivacity. You were often driven from my presence without knowing how you had displeased me. Your requests were denied even when they were most reasonable. I have cost you many tears, Selina, but in future you will bless the early severities which taught you patience, and habituated you to controul. You had hours of comfort, I had none. Think what must be the feelings of that mother who envied her child its peaceful slumbers !

“ Subdued at length by that submitting sweetness which met my restrictions with obedience, and my harshness with affection, my heart

yielded to the feelings of a mother. I found in you the kindest nurse of my infirmities, the most faithful confidante of all the woes I dared to reveal. But still pursued by the consequences of my fault, I only experienced a variety in my anguish, and though I felt less for my own deprivations, your injuries agonized every nerve. I saw you, with a natural claim to every advantage which an eminent station affords, friendless and portionless, retaining that rank which made you an object of impertinent curiosity, or useless pity, but deprived by me of a father's protection and a sister's friendship. As your beauty and talents unfolded, I felt the full consciousness that you might one day reproach me for depriving you of no common share of admiration, and an establishment, if not of the highest rank, yet yielding to few. To all my pangs I added the

fear that my misfortunes would be discovered, that you would one day be told the shame of which I had made you inheritrix, and induced to hate and renounce the parent you now so kindly cherished. Thus, Selina, I felt all the mother's sorrows, and was a stranger to all her joys. The death of Lord Avondel increased this last apprehension almost to madness. Death-beds sometimes reveal secrets. I knew he had written testimonies of my frailty, and the suddenness of his removal might not have permitted him to destroy what perhaps his vanity had preserved.

"I now conclude he acted in this point with honour; if so, Wilson only knows my crime. I charge you keep her with you, though she will be your torment as she has been mine. My purse has been the never-failing spring to which her rapacity has applied to

feed the wants of her worthless family, and I have seen the frugal savings of my jointure, which it was my duty to lay up as a portion for you, wasted on a herd of vagabonds, at the request, or, shall I say, the *command*, of one who had, what I valued more than life, my reputation in her keeping. Such is the degradation, such the injustice, to which the arts of a libertine have bowed a woman of rank and honour ! O, how I hate the memory of the villain, who, to gratify a momentary pleasure, thus humbled me to the dust, drove me from every social joy, made me wrong the child I love, and feed the rapacity I detest ! Yet, Selina, by all your love and duty, never provoke Wilson to discover my shame.

“ Since I have yielded you to the solicitations of my friends in London, my despondency has increased with

my bodily torments, and when I complain, this creature tells me I ought to repent. Fool ! what have the last twenty years of my life been but a life of repentance ? Have I not suffered ? Have I not wept ? Selina, by that ruined wretch whom you call your mother you could never judge of what I was while the innocent and happy wife of a man of honour. O, my poor girl ! beware of sensual, selfish man. Especially beware, when he steals upon you in the mask of exaggerated reverence, when he exalts you to angelical excellence. Tis then he lays the surest train to degrade you to something yet meaner than his brutal self.

“ I cannot live—I have no motive to wish to drag on what I feel to be past all endurance. Yet, to whom shall I entrust my daughter ? I have heard that the son of Avondel inherits the graces, but not the vices of his

Father. Perhaps he might cherish thee with a brother's holy love. But thou, destitute orphan, must never seek his friendship by an act of dreadful confidence. Little canst thou think how my heart has been wrung at hearing him commended as a nobleman deserving the most amiable of women. A thought shoots across my mind. A thousand chances are against it. He never can select my portionless girl for his wife, and his virtues are a security of thine. Once I resolved to save thy heart the pang of this discovery. "The secret of her birth," said I, "shall die with me.—And yet there is a possibility—Concealment may lead thee to a connection at which nature recoils, and thus my guilt will be increased, and my punishment too in that future world to which I hardly dare cast a thought, even while my wearied spirit wishes to find it a place of repose.

If years of anguish can atone for months of guilt and folly, I cannot think, nor can I longer support my present pangs. I will trust to thy meekness, Selina, thou wilt not curse me; thou wilt never disclose my shame; thou wilt tremble at the name of a lover; thou wilt abjure that vanity which solicits idle, frivolous, dangerous, destructive adulation.

“Wilson continues to haunt me. If my looks are wild, tis her impertinence that irritates me. If she would leave me, all would be quietness. Am not I rational, Selina? Have not I told a connected story? She is ever calling upon me to repent and submit, Woman, I have repented. I do submit, even to thee, thou vile accomplice with him who betrayed me! I can say no more. My innocent, ruined daughter forgive, thy mother,

HONORIA MONTOLIEU.

Lady Selina's packet contained one more letter. It was from Wilson, giving an account of her unhappy lady's death, and intimating that it proceeded from such an immoderate use of opiates as proved her to be resolutely bent on self-destruction. Lady Montolieu seemed once to have intended to transmit her history to her daughter during her life, but her resolution failed, and it was found by Selina in a private drawer with her jewels, in time to prevent the incestuous marriage; the bare possibility of which appeared to be the chief reason for urging the haughty, miserable, lady to discover her crimes, but not soon enough to prevent the amiable lovers from unavailing regret and undeserved reproach.

A narrative penned in such circumstances, by a hand convulsed with pain, and trembling with the prelude

horrors of meditated suicide, obliterated in many parts by tears which had flowed from eyes long since closed in death, and breathing the proud yet deep remorse of an afflicted rather than a contrite spirit, now removed to that world where adulation cannot soothe, nor rank protect; must surely have checked the career of the most abandoned libertine, and taught him to consider the ultimate end of criminal artifices and desires. Still more must he have been awed into the subjugation of his passions, by reflecting on the subsequent miseries entailed on virtuous and highly deserving lovers. Who shall set bounds to the overflowings of ungodliness, or predict where the evils occasioned by one wicked deed will terminate? If the innocent offspring are not, as in this instance, the victims, the influence of a bad example is incalculable. It misleads inexperience, it corrupts

simplicity ; folly flies to it as an excuse, and it hardens frailty into depravity. How carefully should the powerful and the eminent consider their ways, especially at this period, when the sword of divine punishment is apparently suspended over our menaced country ! And how strictly does it behove every private individual to act the part of the real patriot, by guarding his conduct with such religious and moral vigilance as not to add to the burden of national sin, the only invincible enemy of England. Surely, it augurs ill respecting the state of public virtue, to see so little of that grave abhorrence of vice in the abstract, which, without infringing the claims of candour and charity to particular offenders, marks the pure morals of a high-minded people. We may laugh at folly, we may ridicule slight deviations from rectitude ; but, by what

strange perversion of our faculties does the most direct breach of the holy laws of God, the most determined contempt of every solemn tie, abandoned profligacy, avowed prostitution, or shameless effrontery, excite mirth instead of chilling the reflecting mind with horror? Alas! the awful form of British greatness, gashed with the wounds of war, falls, not like the patriot and the warrior, magnanimous and graceful, but like the buffoon in some of our earliest dramas, who, lest scenes of distress should affect too deeply, diverts the audience with his grimaces, and while battles are fought, and crowns lost and won, shakes his sides with idiot laughter, and finds treason and murder extremely diverting.

“Merciful heaven,” exclaimed Lord Avondel, “from what extremes of guilt and horror has thy guiding pro-

vidence preserved me! My innocent boy, never will I expose thy heart to those sorrows which a father's offences have planted in mine." He again cast his eyes over Lady Montolieu's letter, confessed the weakness of self-depend- ing virtue, and prayed with energy for divine assistance.

The transport which appeared in the countenances of his servants when he alighted at his own house, testified their own worth and their affection for him. His mind was too much agitated to enjoy his wonted satisfaction from their looks of welcome. He summoned Johnson to attend him. "My faithful friend," said he, graciously extending his hand with a look of melancholy benignity: the overwhelming emotion checked his utterance, and he faltered as he inquired after his countess.

"Somewhat better this morning," was the reply.

"Then she knows my absence, and it cause?" Johnson bowed in silence.

Avondel smote his breast with vehemence. Shame and remorse withheld him from viewing the misery he had caused. "Fetch me my child, Johnson," said he; "that cannot upbraid me."

"My lady," returned the upright servant, "will not suffer my young lord to be removed out of her apartment. I trust your lordship will forgive me."

"Forgive you, Johnson, yes, and revere you!"

Johnson dropped upon his knees in ecstasy, called him his noble and ever honoured lord, and conjured him to visit his dear lady. "Her heart," said he, "is breaking, but she is all meekness."

"Stop a moment," said Avondel. "You have seen me in battle, Johnson. These are fears which ill become a soldier, but by all the pangs I suffer, I will never wound her tenderness, nor tempt your honour more. I have been in a delirium, a strange suspension of every just conclusion, and upright purpose. I awoke when on the brink of a precipice, and am still giddy with recollecting my danger."

There are scenes to which description cannot do justice. Such was the reconciliation of Lord and Lady Avondel. The change from deep despair to the fullest happiness was agonizing. Emily fainted, wept, embraced her child, gazed on the recovered idol of her soul, begged, conjured him, to forget the past. Again wept, pressed his hand to her lips, and intreated him to forgive her tears. This tumultuary joy soon subsided into serene

delight, and perfect confidence. With all the obliterating conciliation of real affection, she not only appeared to forget her former trials, but with never ceasing solicitude strove to reconcile him to himself. This was a task of no small difficulty. By pondering on all the circumstances which led to his infatuation, the earl unwound the clue of Paulina's artifices, and traced the causes of his credulity to his culpable vanity and fastidious respect for his own deserts. The consequence was, that he detested her and despised himself. This latter was a new and exquisitely painful sentiment. The generosity of his faithful wife deepened his self-dissatisfaction, and even the smiles and playful endearments of his child could only for a moment interrupt the anguish of remorse. That faithful wife he had resolved to abandon. He was on the

eve of blasting the fortunes of that lovely child. And for what? To become the tool of a perfidious wanton, the bravo of a courtesan, the defender of one who deserved punishment, the interrupter of justice, not the protector of innocence. O, degraded Avondel! what can restore thee to that self-esteem so dear to thy lofty spirit? Of all the labours which an heroic soul can undertake, of all the duties which magnanimity is called upon to perform, no labour is so painful as that of retracing thy own backslidings, no duty so agonizing as that of disclaiming thy long-cherished superiority, and confessing not merely mistakes and infirmities, but the shameful degradation of gross offences.

CHAP. XXXI.

Come, all you spirits
 That tend on mortal thoughts, unsex me here;
 And fill me, from the crown to th' toe, top-fulk
 Of direct cruelty, make thick my blood,
 Stop up th' access and passage to remorse,
 That no compunctious visitings of nature
 Shake my fell purpose.

SHAKESPEARE.

LADY PAULINA, on returning home, took no pains to conceal her emotion, or to give any colouring to her sudden return. Finding that the general was not arrived, she summoned her servants and charged them to

say nothing of her absence, in a manner that rather excited than silenced curiosity. She then dismissed them with a liberal gratuity, and prepared for the return of her husband with all the apparent fondness of an affectionate wife, and succeeded so well, that she met the man she had so lately wished immersed in a watery grave, with a tender joy, dimmed by a sort of latent melancholy, the result she said of a recent indisposition.

A few days after General Monthermer's return, she required a private conference with his secretary, Mr. Villars, of whom she inquired if her husband had received any communications from Lord Avondel. On hearing that the latter had only sent the usual complimentary message, and that the general expressed his surprise that his old friend did not greet him with a personal welcome, Paulina re-

iterated the word "friend," and with a sarcastic smile lifted her eyes to heaven in a sort of expostulatory indignation at the prophanation of that word.

"I thought," said she, seeming to recollect herself, "you had left the room Villars. I charge you do not notice my emotion to your master." Villars bowed. "I also strictly prohibit you from making any inquiry among my servants." Villars again signified acquiescence. "'Tis my last command," continued Paulina, "that you punctually acquaint me with whatever passes between the general and Lord Avondel." On uttering the earl's name she seemed to thrill with involuntary horror, and Villars, who had exactly the degree of prudence and discernment which Paulina imputed to him, retired, the prepared, but unconscious, tool of revenge.

His first business was to make what he called circumspect, but which might with more justice be termed general, inquiries among the persons composing the establishment of his lady, from whom he learned the frequency of the earl's visits, and the publicity of his attachment. For, from regard to their own reputation, which servants always in some degree connect with that of their employers, as well as gratitude to a mistress who possessed that cardinal virtue in a mercenary eye, liberality, they were inclined to describe Paulina as being as much of a vestal as could consist with the bold advances of the most audacious lover, since the days of Tarquin. Indians and Europeans, Gentoos, Mahomedans, and Christians, were alike unanimous in signifying, that their dear lady was a paragon worthy universal imitation. Her retinue was the most splendid and nu-

merous in London, indulged in every luxurious propensity, and seldom reminded of their dependent situation by the imposition of unpleasant offices, or restrictions which might interfere with their ideas of gentility. No doubt could be entertained of their affection for their lady, while she sailed on the smooth current of prosperity, and allowed them to hope their harvest was not over.

I believe that those who are well acquainted with the manners of servants know, that their creed virtually agrees with the ancient Persians, in ascribing equal potency to an evil and a good supreme agent. As the latter is always showering down douceurs and favours in the shape of a generous easy superior, so the former is always some gripping prying hunk who creeps into every family and glides about to discover peculation and prevent idleness.

In Paulina's household this evil genius was Lord Avondel. Contrary to the established rule, which requires that every gentleman who wishes to violate the marriage-bed of his friend, should commence his advances by gaining over her domestics, the earl had thought it his duty to inform Paulina of some nefarious combinations, and had remonstrated on the wasteful extravagance of her dependants as sufficient to exhaust even the ample resources of an Indian General. Though such conduct spoke the faithful friend rather than the insidious seducer, yet every one of Lady Paulina's servants beheld it as a proof of his intention to ruin their dear lady, and Mr. Villars, who had more zeal and fidelity than discrimination, was easily persuaded to believe, that nothing but a superior share of prudence and chastity could have preserved this new Penelope in-

violate till the return of her Ulysses. He became therefore what zealous but short-sighted people often are, a conscientious dupe, a convenient conduit through which Paulina could convey whatever intelligence she pleased to her husband. She had long known that Monthermer's uxorious fondness had more of passion than confidential affection, and that his dotage, though extreme, did not always prevent him from entertaining suspicions of the fidelity of the woman he idolized. His confidential secretary always acted in the capacity of a spy, and the intractability of the person who had held this office induced Paulina to get him removed before she left India, and to introduce Villars, on whose gratitude, aided by inexperience, she believed she could depend for a convenient degree of blindness.

... With that masterly policy and intui-

tive view of the human heart, which formed part of Paulina's striking qualities, she appeared to admit the well-intentioned Villars into her confidence, and after bitterly lamenting the treachery, which, as far as regards females, even men of honour allow themselves to practise, she expressed her anxious wishes that Lord Avondel's conduct might be concealed from her beloved Monthermer, whose generous attachment and impetuosity might probably cause him to have recourse to such measures as would lead to consequences she trembled to foresee. She therefore conjured Villars; in case of that nobleman's visiting the general, to prevent an interview, and conduct him as if by mistake to her, where, indignant as she was at again beholding him, she would once more try to direct his truant love to his own amiable wife, or at least to make him desist from

his nefarious pursuit. Villars admired her prudence and promised obedience.

Paulina's real motives were however different from those she assigned. The loss of her lover, the personal insults she had endured, the triumph of Selina, and the reported happiness of the gentle Emily, had at first inspired her mind with the most vehement thirst for vengeance, but the disgust and contempt which her husband still excited, and the marked contrast of his manners to those of the all-elegant, all-enlightened Avondel, which her fancy hourly suggested, told her that the earl yet retained possession of her heart, and she resolved to try by one more interview if he really was grown callous to her charms, or at least to discover if he was an accomplice in the plan of her detention. She would hear from himself that he renounced her, before she awoke "black vengeance

from the hollow kell," to take "the crown and hearted throne of love."

The first wish of the repentant earl was to be restored to that self-esteem which he had so weakly and wickedly forfeited. His next desire was, that the world should be so deceived by appearances as to be unable to draw any positive conclusions to his dishonour. Finding from Monthermer's answers to his messages that there were no suspicions rankling in the general's heart, he trusted that Paulina would for her own sake preserve inviolate secrecy as to the past, and he resolved in future to avoid that bewitching woman under the pretence that there had been some disagreement between her and Lady Avondel. He hoped such a slight intercourse might be kept up with the general as would serve to lull suspicion. But at his first visit Villars punctually fulfilled his intrusted com-

mission; and while Avondel endeavoured to bend his integrity to that degree of dissimulation which would permit him to meet the man he meant to have injured, without disclosing by his humiliation his meditated villainy, he suddenly found himself alone with Paulina.

Of all the bad qualities of women none gives such disgust to men of reflection as effrontery. Avondel's eyes flashed disdain, but Paulina softened him by an affectation of extreme confusion. She pretended to tremble, accused Villars of mistake, and called him back to bid him go in search of his master. When his retiring step announced that he had left the anti-room, she turned her tearful eyes with bewitching sweetness on Avondel, who, reddening with shame and vexation, unwilling to reproach and abhorring to console, sat sternly silent.

After a pause long enough to give vent to those signs of contrition which she thought must move his flinty heart, and which indeed would have induced him to pity any offender but the slanderer of Selina, she exclaimed, "Is it thus we meet?" "Tis well," returned Lord Avondel, "that we meet in circumstances which allow us to retrieve our errors."

"Have you then," said she, indignant at his coldness, "utterly renounced the woman whose confidence you so earnestly solicited, and cruelly betrayed?"

"No, madam," returned the earl, with a look of ineffable disdain; "Lady Avondel shall find me faithful to my vows, and you may depend upon my inviolable secrecy. Let us exchange forgiveness, and meet no more."

"Agreed," replied Paulina, "never

did our minds more fully accord. I rejoice that the mistake of Villars has allowed me to bid you an eternal farewell. Am I right in interpreting your words into a promise, that you will not animate the vacant countenance of your wife with smiles and blushes, by telling her how you lured me from my house to insult and expose me? This, and your forbearing to accuse me to my husband, I shall receive as magnanimous returns for that disinterested attachment to which I would have sacrificed fortune, fame, and peace."

Avondel scorned to prophane the term gratitude by using it to a woman whom he no longer considered as the frail victim of passion, but as wicked from principle, and vitally depraved. He pondered whether he was not called upon to shew Monthermer the real character of his wife, and advise him

to justify his own honour and preserve his peace by separating from this female fiend. But that indescribable mixture of indulgence and contempt which men of refinement always feel for women, however dangerous or infamous, withheld him from attempting to crush her whom his conscience reminded him was his partner in guilt. He coldly answered, that Lady Avondel's disposition was a security against his ever entertaining her with subjects which would give her pain instead of pleasure. Ignorant of the insults of which Paulina complained, he did not attempt to justify himself from being the employer of Sandford, and expressing some surprise at the general's delay he turned to contemplate an Italian landscape. Paulina shrieked, and appeared fainting. Convinced it was an artifice, the earl kept his seat, ruminating with horror on his past

infatuation, which now exposed him to the effects of a chicanery equally obvious, and on the just retribution which made that credulity the means of involving him in difficulties and dangers.

The servants were soon summoned by Paulina's hysterical vociferations, and Villars among the number. The lady was conveyed to her chamber, and the astonished secretary interrogated the earl (whose attention seemed scarcely attracted by the farce) as to the cause of this sudden disorder.

"She will best explain it," answered he, "my visit this morning was to General Monthermer, and I know not by what mistake I have been suffered to intrude upon his lady."

"My lord," said Villars, significantly, "the general must be informed of Lady Paulina's indisposition."

The earl replied emphatically, he

had no motive for wishing it to be concealed, and retired with more self-satisfaction than he had for some time felt, rejoicing that he had repulsed the blandishments of the syren, and persuaded that her duplicity was too apparent to be dangerous.

But though the lion treads disdainfully on the snake, the lordly beast often falls a victim to its poison. Paulina knew exactly when she ought to recover, and summoning Villars to her couch, on which she reclined in all the pomp of languishment, she ordered her women to retire. She then asked him if the traitor was gone? if he shewed any signs of remorse? or had affected to account for the disorder into which his insuperable effrontery had thrown her? Finding that Avondel had preserved that disdainful silence which her knowledge of his lofty integrity might have assured her

would conceal her guilt, she informed Villars that Monthermer must be informed of his designs, since the return of her legal protector and her own lenient offer of forgiving the past, had only so far hardened him in his resolution of making her either guilty or miserable, that she found he had actually whispered away her reputation, and had the boldness to assure her, that as no woman of virtue would now visit her on account of his assiduities, her situation could not be rendered any worse.

The reluctance which Villars felt to involve his master in a bloody contest with a man of Lord Avondel's skill and eminence, and this too immediately on his return to England, where he hoped to enjoy for many years the hard-earned affluence for which he had sacrificed his youth and health, induced the secretary to pause before he

took any irretrievable step, and he expressed his wonder that Lord Avondel should thus openly avow his designs. Paulina assured him that this fearless audacity was a peculiar mark of the earl's villainy, who ever strove to intimidate when he could not allure. That he was even capable of attempting to carry her off by force, she inferred from a most singular adventure which had befallen her on her attempt to meet the general, when he returned to England. Her carriage was surrounded by armed banditti, calling themselves officers of justice, who preferred a most ridiculous charge against her of having been guilty of a felony, and but for the accidental interposition of a superintendant of police, who arrived in time to liberate her, she was convinced she should have been conveyed to some remote fortress, entirely in the power of a brutal tyrant

till she would have consented to purchase liberty by the forfeiture of honour.

A tale so romantic, so dissimilar to the usual course of events in England, staggered Villars still more, instead of inducing him to place implicit confidence in his lady's veracity. He had not however the slightest suspicion of the malignity of her intentions, and only supposed that her fanciful enthusiasm had given a marvellous air to some ordinary occurrence, which her limited knowledge of English manners did not allow her to comprehend. But when on questioning the servants who accompanied her, he found that there had been a real arrest, and detention for several hours, by whose contrivance they knew not, though they suspected by Lord Avondel's, as he certainly was privy to her intention of going out of town that evening,

Villars fell into the usual error of candid people, who think they have been guilty of cherishing a false suspicion, and with unbounded confidence surrendering his mind to the guidance of a detestable woman, he became the blind minister of her revenge.

Paulina now resolved to alarm Monthermer by the affectation of languor, seclusion, and grief. She denied that she had any particular indisposition in a manner which convinced him that she concealed something which would cause him real distress. His intreaties to be informed of the truth were redoubled, her denials grew fainter. She complained that he would tease her out of her prudent resolves, and at last protested Villars must have betrayed her, or he would not be so importunate. Monthermer took the hint, and boldly taxed Villars with breach of duty in neglecting to tell

him the cause of that sorrow which preyed upon his lady's mind. Villars stammered, excused himself by his desire to avoid disagreeable consequences, and believing Paulina had anticipated his communications, expressed his hopes that Lord Avondel would give up his designs from a conviction of their impracticability, without the general's interference. Monthermer coloured, bit his lip, and replied, that Avondel never abandoned any plan, since whatever his prudence undertook his genius rendered successful. "In this instance he must," answered Villars, "for I am persuaded Lady Paulina's virtue will prove alike impregnable whether he assail it by slander or by art."

"Right," replied the general, "yet there will be no harm in whispering in his ear that such is my opinion."

"Will you, Sir, permit me to be the bearer of this intelligence?"

"I wish to avoid mistakes," said Monthermer coolly, "and I conceive a business of this nature is best adjusted by the principals."

Villars with affectionate terror expressed his dread of the consequences of this rencontre. "The man is mad," exclaimed the general, "what rencontre do you apprehend? Am I to stand to be shot at by every lecher who likes my wife?" Whistling a tune with affected gaiety, while his eye flashed fire, he returned to Paulina, whose penetration soon discovered, that the prologue had been performed which was to usher in the tragedy she had so long meditated.

"Ah!" said she, with a shriek of terror, "you know all."

"I know," replied Monthermer,

with passionate tenderness, "that I have the best wife in the world."

"And I fear you also know, the most perfidious friend?"

"No," said the general, "when he attempted to rob me of the treasure I entrusted to his care, he ceased to be my friend."

Paulina replied, that his calmness removed a load of terror from her mind.

"I feared," said she, "that the fatal maxims of false honour, and that pride which distinguishes your nation as the 'lords of human kind,' would have compelled you to hazard your precious life, and thus plunge me in irremediable despair."

Monthermer mingled his affectionate thanks with assurances that he heartily despised the villain, and Paulina, affecting to believe that composure to be real, which she plainly per-

ceived was a thin disguise to implacable resentment, consented to gratify him with that full confidence which she had long studiously withheld. She proceeded to describe Lord Avondel's solicitations, insidious artifices, and daring machinations, and her own at first unsuspecting friendship, and, when his purposes were unveiled, resolute prudence, in such colours, that the indignant flesh of her husband's cheek died away to the deadly pale of revenge; and though he affected to listen to her narrative with careless ease he muttered curses through his clenched teeth, while his hand involuntarily grasped his sword.

"My life, my lord," said Paulina, again, "you alarm me. You promised not to put your own safety on a par with that most infamous and insidious of friends,—of seducers I mean?"

"True," replied Monthermer, "I

know I have promised. My sword was entangled. Sweet, apprehensive tenderness, why these terrors?"

"O ever wise and kind," exclaimed Paulina, "the air of your moody climate has damped my native fire. But since even your return does not intimidate him let us fly to Italy, there we shall be safe. Surrounded by powerful friends he dare not there attempt to force me from you."

"It would be a desperate attempt in England," observed Monthermer.

Paulina replied, that there was no knowing to what crimes the indulgence of impetuous desires would lead a powerful criminal. Like many other iniquitous moralizers, conscience compelled her to feel the justice of the observation she made with a design to deceive.

Monthermer's eye again glanced upon his sword. "It would not be

inexpedient," said he, "just to tell Avondel that there is danger in impetuous desires."

"If you could do it very calmly it might recall the lost wretch to the path of honour. In particular, I should rejoice if he were compelled to retract the gross aspersions which he has cast upon my reputation, and which have so far succeeded that I am now exiled from the respectable society in which I formerly moved. He hoped, by describing me as the partner of his guilty pleasures, to remove the most effectual barrier to actual criminality. But though an unprotected stranger, ignorant of English manners, and for a length of time confiding in this serpent, thus on my bended knees I swear by the chaste powers who preside over marriage"—

"Spare your assertions," interrupted Monthermer, "till I doubt your

truth and honour. Go on with your story. You were you say a stranger, a foreigner, a beautiful woman, without one friend or relation, in an unknown country.—I commended you to the protection of Avondel—Curses blast the villain—Why are you silent? —He shall retract or die.”

“He knows his own superior skill at the sword,” resumed the false Italian. “At least avoid that weapon. I have heard him say there is not a man in England who could meet him in the field on equal terms.”

“He said so before I arrived,” said Monthermer, with a sardonic grin, piqued at having a superiority on which he prided himself called in question.

“No,” replied Paulina, “truth obliges me to own that it was at our last interview.” Monthermer reiterated the words “last interview,” and

Paulina confessed that she had been thus unguarded from an expectation that Villars had told him all. She then owned that the base earl had affronted her with a visit a few days ago, that he chose the known hour of the general's absence, and owing to her unwillingness to cause a rupture, she had once more endured his hateful presence, and had urged every motive to induce him to desist from his designs. But the horrid oaths which he swore, to brave death in this world, and perdition in the next, rather than relinquish her, added to his passionate assurances that her reputation was overwhelmed with cureless opprobrium, had so agitated her, that she fell into fits, a circumstance well known to her servants, who indeed, by incidental evidence could confirm all her testimony.

She now cast her eyes on her credu-

lous dupe with ineffable fondness, and affecting to be alarmed at his undisguised frenzy, she pretended to believe that Avondel might be persuaded by mild measures to retract his slanders, and desist from his lawless pursuit. Her own prudence and virtue would, she said, soon rid her of this intruder without any dangerous risk. The general agreed it would, and folding her in what she hoped and believed was intended for a farewell embrace, complained that the house was hotter than Bencoolen, and he must walk out for air. Paulina accompanied him to the door, as well to prevent the attendance of Villars as to fan his rage by those mock alleviations and warnings of danger, which she knew would whet his courage to desperation.

On returning to her own apartment with somewhat of the delight which

Medea might be supposed to feel when she had immolated her children on the shrine of revenge, she was met by Villars, who, in the terror of real affection, inquired where his master was gone? Paulina upbraided him severely for having violated the confidence she had reposed in him, by discovering the baseness of Lord Avondel, and by an affectation of extreme displeasure at having the general thus exposed to danger, she contrived to withdraw the well-disposed young man from his first design of following his master, by engaging him in a vindication of his own conduct. She then assured him that she trusted her prudence had warded off the evils his want of secrecy might have occasioned; that she had reasoned with Monthermer till he was quite calm, and laughing at the earl's effrontery was gone out to dinner. Having thus

detained him till it was improbable his interference could prevent her hopes, she pardoned and dismissed him, giving him as a sign of restored grace a collection of canzonets and sonnets to be transcribed into her common-place book.

She now ruminated alone on the alternatives which her sanguinary views presented. Both the gentlemen were men of determined courage, it was therefore highly probable one would fall. Suppose it was Lord Avondel? her revenge would then be gratified. But considering his superior skill and calmness, the more likely, and far more cherished, expectation was, that his arm would release her from the disgusting fondness of a husband for whom her hatred and contempt was increased, even by the facility with which he fell into her snares. Thus, though slighted, re-

jected, reproved, and as she believed, insulted, by Lord Avondel, his virtue and dignity commanded her admiration, and the recollection of his graceful manners, superior conversation, and elegant tenderness, while she held him in her chains, was so dear to her susceptibility, and so flattering to her vanity, that she still considered him as the first of mankind, and even while she framed a scheme for his destruction, wished success to his arm.



CHAP. XXXII.

The soul no more on mortal good relies,
 But nobler objects urge her hopes and cares,
 And sick of folly views no tempting prize
 Beneath the radiant circle of the stars.

MRS. CARTER.

WHILE these scenes passed in London, Lady Selina Delamore, reflecting on those traits of settled malice and deep design which were so apparent in Paulina's character, entertained painful apprehensions for Lord Avondel's safety. By way of convincing her, that there was no reason to appre-

hend he should be assaulted from that quarter, the earl, in his letters to Lime Grove, stated the affectionate welcome which General Monthermer had received from his wife, the perfect cordiality which subsisted between them, her retirement from company, and every circumstance which indicated real reformation. I need not add, that this account was dispatched previously to the interview described in the last chapter; and till then he really hoped that disappointment had taught Paulina contrition. A clearer insight into the disposition of this enterprizing and unprincipled woman, induced Selina from the first to doubt the reality of this instantaneous conversion, this entire change of opinions, affections, and habits, which might indeed be useful to carry on a design, but which a proud unconvinced offender never sincerely adopts. That she designed

to blind the general, and to shut his ears against every report to her disadvantage, was obvious. But Selina also suspected another purpose, and feared the great and generous Avondel was the premeditated victim intended to cement with his blood the discordant union of credulity and falsehood. Her anxiety to expedite the intended removal of the Avondels from London now became extreme; but as she knew that by strongly insisting on the danger of the earl's stay she should rather retard than accelerate her purpose, she urged him to recollect, that, after having devoted so large a portion of his life to the service of the public, the rich inheritance which his wife possessed called upon him to change the statesman and the legislator into the country gentleman, the beneficent nobleman, the enlightened considerate landlord, the friend

and feudal benefactor of the fair domain, which claimed his presence and needed a superintending understanding liberal and discriminating as his, to repair the injuries which waste, neglect, and good intentions, unassisted by vigorous intellect, had caused. She spoke of the repose his mind required after the painful conflicts it had sustained. She mentioned various plans of improvement and schemes of beneficence which Emily wished to establish at the seat of her ancestors, and that her health and that of his son would be improved by the balsamic air of Devonshire. Lastly, she reminded him, that though she had no doubt of the sincerity of his intentions, yet the same command which, founded on a knowledge of human weakness, taught us to pray for supernatural aid against temptation enjoined us to flee from it: that our prayers

were also precepts, and it was a solemn mockery to contradict our requests by our actions. "The history of our unhappy parents," said she, "is a dreadful warning to teach us not to trust in our own strength, and as I am convinced Paulina's affection for you has been most violent, I know your generous mind will feel it to be a duty to leave her to cherish her returning sense of fidelity to her husband, without exposing her virtue, while unconfirmed by habit, to the danger of contrasting the man she has loved with the inferior qualities of him to whom she is bound, and to whom you tell me she is now heroically devoting her undivided attentions."

To arguments so cogent Lord Avondel could only oppose one reason for delay. A motion was expected to be made in the house of lords in which he

thought the honour of his sovereign and the national prosperity were deeply involved. It was a scheme of the opposition to gain popularity. He had detected its mischievous tendency, and he resolved to oppose it with all the power of his eloquence, and the weight of his name. In unravelling the sophistry of these pseudo patriots, he had often lost sight of those painful impressions of degradation which were inseparably united with Paulina's image, and with this great effort to defend his country he determined to close his public career, to bid adieu to cities, courts, and camps, and to pursue the plan Selina prescribed. In the enjoyment of her pure and instructive friendship, in the gentle tenderness of his amiable wife, in the delightful employment of forming the mind and manners of his son, and in all those generous and social offices which

simple wealth permits a liberal heart and enlightened mind to perform, he promised himself no common portion of happiness, and fancied his sun would descend in mild glory. So probably it might have done, had he never submitted to that malign influence which blasts with repercussive destruction after it has ceased to be lord of the ascendant.

On the day the motion was brought forward Avondel went down to the house at an early hour. In passing through the avenues he was assailed by Monthermer, with an abrupt inquiry if he was alarmed at seeing him? Avondel replied, the sight of an old friend was more calculated to give pleasure than alarm. "'Tis strange then," returned the general, "that I should have been some weeks in England without seeing you."

“ I have called,” said Avondel, “ and you were absent.”

“ You have called !” exclaimed Monthermer, and then added with emphasis, “ This to my face ? Thou villain !”

Avondel retreated as if struck by the charge of a culverin. His blood boiled at the opprobrious epithet, but he recollected rage was as delirious as insanity, and determining to be calm, he asked the reason why he was assaulted with such language ?

“ Ask your own conscience, cursed dissembler,” was the reply of the infuriated husband. He stamped with his foot, and added, “ my wife, my wife ! I will have satisfaction.”

“ Your wife,” returned Avondel, “ is spotless for me.”

Monthermer continued to rave, called her an injured vestal, and demanded a recompense for intended wrongs in a still louder tone.

"This is no place," said the earl, "to discuss our dispute. I am summoned into the house by important duties. You are a brave man, general, as such suspend this fury."

"You will meet me then?" inquired Monthermer.

"As a friend, and as the vindicator of my own honour, I will meet you any where," was Lord Avondel's reply.

"To-morrow at six in the morning without seconds in the Green Park."

"I will meet you without witnesses," answered Avondel, "and with no other weapons than truth and justice."

At this moment Lord Glenvorne joined them, attracted by the loud tones and violent gestures of the general. "I trust," said the marquis, "I am not an impertinent intruder."

Avondel answered this was his first

interview with General Monthermer since his return from India, "but not our last," muttered Monthermer as he retired. "I trust," replied the earl, in a firm but conciliatory tone, "we shall meet often in amity and esteem."

"You must not call my friendship officiousness," said Lord Glenvorne to Lord Avondel, "if I anxiously ask, what has been the nature of your conversation with Paulina's husband?"

"The denomination you have used," replied the earl, "points it out. He has heard something respecting my intimacy with that lady, which he is disposed to resent. Common report is very busy with characters, but I am convinced it will be easy for me to clear my own conduct. Though violent, Monthermer is a man of honour."

"The less likely" observed the marquis, "to be soon appeased, especially if, as is probable, he has been

wrought up to resentment by one whose influence over his passions is well known."

"We will postpone this subject," answered the generous earl, who could not for a moment believe Paulina had turned his accuser. "A more important business requires immediate attention. My Lord Glenvorne, I ask your support this evening, but it is in the persuasion that you will feel yourself acting as a loyal subject and steady patriot, by ranging yourself on the side of your friend. Firmness and wisdom, my lord, united with courage, will repel public as well as private enemies."

Never did the abilities of Lord Avondel appear to greater advantage than on this evening. With masterly precision he followed the popular orators through the whole range of their sophistical arguments, and by the power of reason, combined with historical

knowledge, exposed the fallacy of their statements, and then appealed to the wisdom, loyalty, and honour, of the house, with a glow of language, a sweetness of intonation, and a gracefulness of action, which warmed every heart. The "wondering senate hung on all he spoke," and the feebleness with which his opponents attempted to reply indicated the secret conviction which the strong fetters of party would not permit them to acknowledge. The motion was negatived by a triumphant majority. Avondel saw himself surrounded by numerous friends, all vying with each other who should give most emphasis and variety to their congratulations. It was known he had fixed the ensuing day to set off for Castle Mandeville. The Premier pressed his hand with an air of fervent gratitude, and wished him every enjoyment in his rural retreat. "You emu-

late Cincinnatus, my lord," said he; "you do not retire to your plough till you have saved your country."

Yet at this perhaps proudest moment of Lord Avondel's life, his soul was depressed with conscious degradation. The arguments of his enemies had been like the green withes which held Sampson, and he had disdainfully snapped them with his touch, but in one point his strength failed him, and Lord Norbury, the Thersites of the oppositionists, assailed him where he was vulnerable. Knowing the exquisite sensibility with which he was endowed, he knew he could gall him with the sly arrow of reproach, and prevent him from enjoying his full-blossoming honours by a hint which none else would understand. He praised with exaggerated metaphor that eloquence which had, he said, paralyzed the house, and absolutely benumbed his

own faculties. He declared it possessed all the bewitching graces of the *Italian* school, enriched by the glowing phraseology of the *oriental* idiom; and he declared neither man nor woman could resist such insinuating persuasion. The glowing cheek and averted eyes of Avondel told Norbury his shaft had not missed its aim, nor did he again attempt to rear his lofty head, or by a keen retort silence his glibbing adversary. Thus cowardly and enfeebling guilt subdued the first man in England, and made him, even in the moment of his triumph, abashed by the sarcasm of a flippant debauchee, whose feelings reproach could not wound, whose character no imputation could degrade. Yet, the allusion which penetrated to the soul of Avondel, passed either undiscovered, or despised for its malignity. No peals of laughter, not even one smile of ap-

probation, disturbed the consistent gravity of British senators, or vitiated that full and solemn eclat which followed the brilliant exertions of the patriot and the legislator. The contemptuously passed unrecorded save by the conscience of the culprit; but where could be found so terrible and humiliating an accuser."

The earl's depression was visible to Lord Glenvorne, who, persuaded that it was connected with his altercation with Monthermer, was anxious to act as a mediator, or by some other means prevent the apprehended consequences. But Avondel treated that business with indifference, and called on the marquis to rejoice at the triumph which truth and wisdom had obtained over the stubborn spirit of party. "To render that triumph complete," said Glenvorne, "we must preserve the worthy by whose exertions it has been

obtained. My lord, if you meet Monthermer, I must be a witness of what passes."

Lord Avondel replied, that as his object was to conciliate, he would do nothing which could by any perversion be deemed exasperating. "I will not," said he, "give him an excuse for adopting a desperate course by intimating that I suspected danger. I have pledged my honour to meet him alone, and to relieve your friendly anxiety I promise by the same inviolable tie, that I will not take any weapon. I trust I shall be able to satisfy his resentment without sanctioning a practice I condemn and abhor."

"I ought," replied the marquis, "to be satisfied with this assurance, as I must prevent all bad consequences; but there is a solemnity in your manner so unlike the exultation, I anticipated from the events of this evening,

which persuades me that you have fears you will not communicate."

"Say feelings," returned Avondel, "and you will be correct. You are young, Lord Glenvorne; the vivid hopes and generous emulation of your age prompt you to consider felicity as synonymous with the glorious achievements of virtuous ambition. To paint my own reflections on retiring from the soul-harrowing scenes of a public life, would be too dispiriting, and I would not at this eventful period rob my country of a generous citizen. Yet, a retrospect of the little good our best purposes and most strenuous endeavours have accomplished, of the dangers we have escaped, the errors we have committed, our infirmities, our weakness, perhaps I should use a stronger term,—Oh Glenvorne, reviewing the circumscribed powers of man when acting in his most capacious

sphere, contemplating the temptations incident to greatness, even in this hour of victory I wish myself an obscure peasant, placed in some peaceful village, with sentiments corresponding to that humble lot, unvexed by opposition, ignorant alike of calumny and fame."

"Whither," inquired the marquis, smiling, "does your lordship wish yourself transported? In what remote corner will you find a man who has neither been praised nor censured, tempted nor opposed? The only difference is, the peasant's world is his own village, yours the British empire, whose legislators you have enlightened, whose battles you have fought, whose rights you have maintained."

"And scandalized her morals," Avondel was ready to add, but shame and the decent pride which attends

true repentance prevented him from continually acknowledging that fault to man which he deplored to God. Glenvorne continued to declaim on the futility of reproach when pointed at a character whose dignified purity repelled every invidious aspersion. Lord Avondel sighed, owned unswerving rectitude was the best defence from calumny, and then asked where faultless virtue dwelt? The noblemen parted, but not till Lord Glenvorne had requested that he might be speedily informed what was the event of his interview with the general.

The tender Emily received her lord with transport. The success which had crowned his labours seemed to her the more welcome, as it was to terminate those cares which she thought corroded his health and peace, and to usher in a new, and, in her

estimation, happier course of life. After listening with tears of affectionate exultation to the history of the debate, she expatiated on the happiness of their future prospects,—the freedom from ceremonious restraints which the country afforded, a larger portion of her lord's society, the company of her aunt, the education of her child, the indulgence of every social and benevolent affection. Her entire affection for her Avondel had not only induced her to forgive him, but to forget the past, and she received him, not as one who sincerely repented, but as one who had never erred. All her anxiety was to cast the same oblivious veil over his mind; but as I have before remarked, here her efforts failed, and her solicitude to reconcile him to himself even deepened his self-reproach. The consciousness that he

had been unjust to such placability, such unalterable love, made him feel incapable of enjoying full complacence in the contemplation of her virtues. On the present evening, the insinuations of Norbury, the threats of Monthermer, and the depression into which the mind naturally sinks after the toil of great exertion, or the flurry of extraordinary success, pre-disposed Lord Avondel to listen with unusual interest to a conversation which painted the joys of beneficence, the pleasures of retirement, and the satisfaction of living for ourselves. The chaste simplicity of his wife's character was called by the subject into full lustre. He wondered how he could ever deem her conversation tasteless, how he could forsake innocence and security for guilt and danger. His past life seemed a fearful

desert, a thorny wilderness, his future, with such associates as Emily and Selina, a paradise visited by angels.

"Yes," said he, to his enraptured consort, "halcyon days await us. It is only now I truly begin to live."

CHAP. XXXIII.

O had I fall'n —————
 Turning with fatal arm the tide of battle!
 But, thus to perish by a villain's hand,
 Cut off from nature's and from glory's course,
 Which never mortal was so fond to run!—

Home.

THOUGH the intrepidity which had often supported Lord Avondel in battle prevented him from *fearing* the issue of his interview with Monthermer, the events of the day had too deeply affected him to allow him to sleep. He hoped, he was persuaded, he should be able to assuage the general's fury, which he supposed origi-

nated from his having heard the common rumour of his intimacy with Paulina : yet, to meet a man whom he had injured (and putting the case as his own, could he conceal from himself that he had injured Monthermer ?) to hope for at best a partial vindication of his own conduct, to know that he had tampered with the affections of a married woman, and actually tottered on the verge of committing one of the foulest crimes, for which he must either apologize or deny his own actions, were sufficient to stretch a mind endowed with such moral susceptibility on the rack of torture, and to make him anticipate the morning with more of dread and horror than he ever experienced in the front of an hostile army.

He rose very early, and in passing the nursery heard the cries of his little son. "Some infantine distress,"

thought he "oppresses him, which his immature organs are unable to ask us to relieve. It is however the distress of innocence. From what motive springs mine? Why at this unusual hour do I steal from my own dwelling, avoiding the eye of my servants, and tortured by an anguish which I cannot communicate?"

He found the general waiting at the appointed rendezvous. A night devoted to intemperance had rendered him still more sanguinary, and absolutely deaf to every attempt at explanation. He commended Avondel's honour in bringing no one to interrupt business, and throwing off his coat, told him he was ready to begin. The earl answered he was unarmed. Monthermer branded him with the name of coward, and Avondel confessed he did fear to violate those laws

which his station called upon him to defend.

“ You should have thought of this,” said Monthermer, “ when you broke the ties of honour and friendship, and attempted to bring disgrace and misery into my family.”

“ General Monthermer,” returned Lord Avondel, with solemn earnestness, “ according to that low estimate of principle which satisfies ordinary minds, I could deny your charge, but I will own that I feel myself a culprit, and I give you a superiority which I never before acceded to man, by asking you to pardon an intentional offence. I have trifled with the affections of Lady Paulina, but this is all my crime.”

“ This is not all,” returned the infuriated husband. “ You must publicly acknowledge your baseness in defaming the virtue you could not corrupt.”

"I do not understand this accusation; speak explicitly."

"Has not my wife's character been aspersed, and herself banished from the best society, on your account?"

"Not through my levity or vanity. I challenge the universe to say I ever breathed a syllable to Lady Paulina's dishonour."

"'Tis herself who accuses you of having first assailed her virtue, and then her fame. Seducer! detractor! what! are you now appalled at being thus deprived of every subterfuge?"

Avondel was indeed appalled by the discovery of that superlative wickedness which he believed impracticable, at the same moment he felt the retributive hand of heaven in thus making her the scourge of his vices. Perceiving him aghast at this accusation, Monthermer told him he would sheath his sword, provided he would make pub-

lic reparation to the slandered virtues of Paulina. Roused to indignation by the proposal, he became so regardless of his personal safety as to forget he was unarmed and unattended in the presence of a furious enemy, instigated by two blind incentives, wine and love. With proud contempt he answered, that he would never degrade himself by making concessions to such a woman as Paulina. Mad with rage, Monthermer rushed upon him and buried his sword in his bosom.

Lord Avondel staggered and fell. For a moment all was silent ; but as the blood streamed from the earl the general's fury changed to deep remorse. He knelt beside him, attempted to raise him from the earth, and anxiously asked if the wound was serious? Avondel faintly answered in the affirmative, and bade him consult his own safety.

Monthermer's compunction was as lively as his vindictive passions. He saw prostrate on the earth, wounded or perhaps murdered by his hand, an English nobleman of the highest rank and fairest fame ; for many years his colleague and commander, the companion of his social pleasures, the friend whose assistance he had often experienced, whose honour and integrity he had tried. This distinguished and revered character he had assailed as an assassin. He had arrested him in the midst of his glorious course with a blow which he could not have warded off, and yet, instead of reproach, he had only bidden him escape. Was this the conduct of a villain ? He grasped the hand of Lord Avondel, who returning its pressure said, " You have been deceived, Monthermer, and stimulated to commit an act your soul abhors. I

forgive you. Fly, while it is in your power; I will not accuse you.'

No instrument of torture could have caused an anguish so exquisite as the general now felt. "Yet, thought he, "I will atone all I can. I will call a surgeon and surrender myself to justice."

At this instant, Villars, who had in vain sought his master at his accustomed haunts, having discovered his appointment with Lord Avondel too late to prevent its fatal effects, arrived at the spot with such assistants as the too probable consequences suggested to his anxious mind. His first care was to force the general into a carriage which was in waiting; his next to succour the bleeding Avondel. The surgeon who accompanied him expressed much apprehension from the appearance of the wound; and looking round exclaimed, how could this have happened, the

gentleman is unarmed?" Faint and exhausted, Lord Avondel opened his eyes. He recognized Villars, and with noble anxiety to save his misguided murderer from the fouler imputations attached to his guilt, he asked him to give him his sword. Villars answered the weapon that lay on the ground was his master's. "It must have been exchanged in the scuffle," said Avondel. "Sir, I require you to attend *me*, and cautiously apprize my family of my situation."

The application of styptics and cordials enabled Lord Avondel to bear removal. He seized the first moment of privacy to ask Villars after his master. "My recovery," said he, "is at best dubious. I advise him to leave England, and as you tender his safety place some confidential person near him. His recollection is extremely confused, and his account of this bu-

business must be disregarded. When this is done let me see you again."

Lord Avondel now submitted his wound to examination, and in the looks of the surgeon read a confirmation of his own opinion. "I am a soldier, sir," said he, "you may be explicit to me, but as some tender hearts are deeply interested in my safety, I could wish they may be gradually prepared for the stroke, by being informed that the case is not quite desperate. Your application has given me ease, I thank you, sir, I have much business to perform."

The return of Villars set the generous nobleman at rest with respect to Monthermer's safety, who, under the care of his chaplain, was on the road to Dover, and would be out of the kingdom in a few hours. Villars spoke of the state of his mind as bordering on insanity. "He accuses himself,"

said he, "of such conduct as we cannot credit, but I trust my Lord you will be just." "I shall be more than just," returned Lord Avondel, "I shall be silent. Mr. Villars, are you in the confidence of Lady Paulina Monthermer?"

"No further, my lord, than as she is the wife of that friend and benefactor to whose fortunes I am inviolably bound."

"'Tis well," answered the earl; "preserve that resolution. She knows the events of this morning?"

"She does."

"And supports her firmness?"

"My lord," answered Villars, reddening, "I request you will not question me about Lady Paulina."

"My intention," said his lordship, "is only to desire that you will faithfully describe to her my last moments, and to tell her I forgive her."

"Mutual forgiveness," returned Villars, deeply affected, "is the duty of us frail beings." "True," replied the earl; he paused a moment, and then added, "I do not ask forgiveness] of Paulina. Continue faithful to the unhappy general, we will mention her name no more."

To describe the distress of Lady Avondel would be impossible. The vehemence of her fears soon overpowered the weak barrier of hope which the surgeon pretended to interpose, and the threatened loss of the idol of her soul so overwhelmed her, that intense affliction subdued her weak frame, and she became incapable of rendering those services which her dying lord required. But a ministering angel sat by his pillow to give him every comfort his agonized frame and contrite spirit demanded from commiserating benevolence. Pale as an alabaster-figure who bends over

some hero's ashes, with looks of unutterable woe, Selina hung over her adored Avondel, whispering the consolations which only heavenly truth can supply in those moments, when the enjoyments of this world vanish from our grasp, fanning that heavenly flame of piety which the tempest of temporal pursuits had nearly extinguished, and tranquillizing his earth-born cares by solemn promises of observing all his injunctions. Her sorrow for this separation, which again blasted all her revived hopes of happiness in this world, seemed to be suspended, by her anxiety to secure a re-union with him in a happier region, and in her solicitude to remove from his death-bed those thorns which corrode the feelings of a husband and a father.

Yet, not even to his beloved Selina, in whose inviolable honour and wise circumspection he so justly confided,

did Avondel detail the circumstances of his interview with the General, or discover the full enormity of Paulina's guilt. He justly considered the wound he had received as a punishment for his past offences, in suffering his insatiable vanity and fastidious pride to seduce his affections and withdraw his society from his unoffending wife, and to devote his heart and his company to a woman whom his judgement told him was destitute of every estimable quality. That woman, too, the wife of another, of a man for whom he professed a friendship, and who entrusted her to his honour. Ought he not to have persevered in his first virtuous purpose, and repelled her advances with disgust, instead of meeting them with encouragement? Should he, who had planned an elopement, who had consented to a criminal amour, who had abandoned a guiltless woman

whose life was bound up in his love, could such a culprit in act and in intention, claim any merit, because, by a providential interference, his career had been interrupted before he reached the goal of wickedness? Was his punishment undeserved, though he was cut off in manhood's glorious prime, while he meditated vast designs of universal benefit, by the momentary impulse of a passion not more repugnant to the laws of God and man than that which he had cherished for days and months? Murder and adultery are condemned by the same code, and it became not him who had broken the seventh commandment in purpose, and who had been almost miraculously prevented from breaking it in act, to bring the hasty, repenting violator of the sixth to condign punishment. He felt the sword of Monthermer to be the instrument of justice, and he was most an-

xious to save the life of him who wept the deed he had done. As to Paulina, his word was plighted not to accuse her. Her image haunted him in the form of an infernal fury, dealing out crimes and vengeance; yet, fearful of cherishing revenge, he wished her to live to feel contrition.

To satisfy the anxiety of the pious Selina, who requested him to signify his repentance for having sanctioned the dreadful enormity of duelling by his practice, he assured her that his conscience was not disturbed on that account. He acknowledged (but without owning that it was on her account) his early youth had been tarnished by an intention of being guilty of such criminal rashness, but having been extricated from this perilous situation by the care of a friend, his reputation for personal courage in his rencounters with the enemies of his country

had enabled him to avoid all private quarrels, without giving any reason to suspect that his refusing to subject himself to these bloody appeals to chance, proceeded from any other motive than principle. "On the faith of a dying man," added he, "I met Monthermer determined not to lift my arm against his life. And now, my best Selina, inquire no more, I bequeath no legacy of revenge to my family. Offer for me your intercessory prayers, that my offences may be forgiven as truly as I forgive."

The love of fame, that last infirmity of noble minds, still clung to the soul of Avondel, and made him greatly fear and deeply regret the possibility that all his illustrious deeds would be sunk in the overwhelming accusation, that his life was at last forfeited to the effects of a criminal passion. Stung with the apprehension that he

should be ranked with those fallen, worthies, who have sacrificed their laurels on the shrine of venal worthless beauty, he called on his Selina to endeavour to preserve his fame. That delicacy of moral feeling which he had ever preserved would not permit him to consider the character of a successful gallant in any other than a disgraceful point of view, and he would have surrendered the reputation of half his great actions to remove the opprobrium of having been a faithless husband. He protested that, except in one instance, when his mind had been warped by suspicion, he had ever been just to the virtues of Emily; and, had his life been spared, he sincerely meant to have made her reparation for all her sorrow. "Gentle innocent," exclaimed he, "her temper was formed for tranquillity and happiness, but I —" here he paused, and looked to heaven with

contrition and intercessive anxiety, yet, full of hope that his widow's sorrows would meet with a comforter.

His care then reverted to that unpe-
rishable part, his memory, which he
must leave to the mercy of his fellow
mortals. "O, my Selina," said he,
"when you hear my actions canvassed,
endeavour to extenuate those you can-
not justify. Tell my accusers that
man is frail, most frail indeed, when
proud and self-dependent he neglects
to solicit the defence of coelestial ar-
mour."

Frequently he conversed about his
son. "It was my first wish," said he,
"to have formed his mind and man-
ners, but I entrust him with a full
confidence to a better guardian. Should
your cares succeed, should you live
to see him adorned with manly energy,
liberal, brave, and disinterested, to
guard his virtues and direct his

inexperience, tell him my story. Prove to him that it is equally our duty to subdue the querulous humour engendered by disappointment, and to guard against the fastidiousness which is fostered by prosperity. He is born to affluence, forewarn him that a full indulgence of even its innocent gratifications produces satiety, and that satiety ever inclines our vitiated desires to tempt the paths of illicit pleasure. Say, that occasional self-denial, the virtue of warriors and sages, the source of true magnanimity and self-command, exhilarating energetic self-denial, is a prudential as well as a christian precept."

His voice faltered while his eyes turned on his best beloved with a look of never dying esteem. "Exemplify your precepts, he continued, "by telling him your own history. Shew him the sanctifying qualities of

affliction rightly applied, and bid him to the public duties which his station requires, add those passive virtues most difficult to practise, which are disregarded by common observers, and often misrepresented and traduced, yet so necessary as a check to intemperate thirst for applause, and so consolatory when our best and purest intentions are opposed by a deluded world. Tell him, for you who have proved the truth can explain it with resistless eloquence, that the virtues which are overlooked by man are the best preparations for Heaven."

Thus, while his faculties remained unclouded by the slow approaches of death, the illustrious and enlightened earl of Avondel continued to utter the dictates of his long experience to what might be truly term-

ed his kindred mind. He expired in her arms, and while, in bitterness of anguish, she deplored the hero's fate, the awakened faith and sincere contrition with which the wanderer sought consolation in the promises of ever-during Mercy, afforded her ineffable consolation. May such be the exit of all who have like him offended! But the conscience of Lord Avondel was not seared, nor his sensibility weakened, nor his understanding degraded, by habitual crimes. He could not glory in his shame, nor justify that in himself which he knew was destructive to the welfare of that country whose prosperity was the first wish of his soul. However guarded by courage, or guided by wisdom, he was convinced England was best defended by the virtues of her off-

spring, without which a nation must ever be found wanting when weighed in that balance which decides the fate of empires.

CHAP. XXXIV.

O Death, all eloquent you only prove
What Dust we doat on when 'tis Man we love.

Pern.

THE maternal tenderness of Lady Avondel preserved her from falling a victim to her intense grief, and in time enabled her to listen to the admonitions of her aunt, who, leading her lovely orphan to her embraces, reminded her that he now was Avondel. Yet, though the duties of her exalted station, which Lady Selina told her it would be criminal to re-

renounce, at length compelled her, with loath reluctance, to resume her place in society, sorrow had quenched in her eyes the torch of love never more to be reilluminated. The generous lover, who admired her virtues, and the artful adventurer, who wished to riot in her fortunes, were alike restrained by a cold melancholy, which proved that it would be profanation to attempt to breathe their vows in her ear. Devoted to the memory of her early love, her widowed heart was only kept from bursting by its passionate attachment to the offspring of her chaste affection, whom she now loved less as her own child than as the sole remains of her idolized husband. It was her dearest enjoyment to gaze on his features, to analyze his sentiments, and to trace their analogy to those of his father. Every day he was shewn the Earl's picture, and every day some anecdote

of that illustrious character was impressed on the memory of the wondering boy. Thus, having had what she termed her dearest enjoyment, the child was committed to his tutors, and Emily, supported by her aunt, attended to the calls of social life, and the claims which want and worth have upon opulence. But though these insuperable obligations called her alternately to the cottage and the palace, neither among the manly characters to whom adversity teaches fortitude, nor the liberal minds in whom science and emulation awaken expanded intellect, did the widowed countess discover the counterpart of her Avondel. Some might be virtuous, others wise; this man had courage, that patriotism; she met elegant gentlemen and graceful figures; but all were inferior to him whom she once called her lord. In him every excellence combined,

dignity, valour, unclouded intellect, magnanimity, and disinterestedness, were all shrouded in his early tomb. There the sun of Britain, after gilding the splendid parallel of attic elegance and Roman integrity, in her estimation set for ever ; and in any public emergency it was her constant practice to exclaim, " Now we want my dearest Lord, he could have saved us."

" But," inquires the reader, " what terrible fate overtook Paulina ? I trust Madam, you will attend to poetical justice, and make her punishment exemplary."

Poetical justice is so little similar to real life, that I am apt to consider the constant attendance to the maxim, that " though vice triumphs for a time, virtue is always victorious at the last," which the fashion of literature now requires, to be one cause of the prevailing sentiment, that temporal pro-

perity is the criterion of merit; an opinion which peculiarizes the present age, though it is equally contradicted by scripture and history; I mean if by merit we understand virtue. Nor have we any reason to recur to past ages, as the present furnishes many striking examples in public and private life, of the most atrocious wickedness becoming remarkable by an uninterrupted career of good fortune.

Why then does poetical justice require us always to visit those offences with visible punishments which the Almighty oftener spares? To be instructive, fiction must be a faithful imitation of real events, chosen with skill, and adapted to moral improvement. Surely, one reason for this vapid repetition of a flattering deception, is, that prosperity, "the God of this world," has taken such hold of our hearts, that we can form no concep-

tion of happiness, or even tranquillity; but as plants growing under the shade of his temple. We underrate "that peace of God which passeth all understanding," and we believe "the worm which dieth not" is too feeble an instrument of torture for unrepentant sin, unless poverty and affliction involve it in sackcloth and ashes. Even moral writers often insist on the necessity of decorating virtue with adventitious splendors, in the face of those Divine precepts which teach us, that if we will be faithful soldiers of our master we must expect to be assailed by outward conflicts of sorrow as well as temptation, though, if we resist the one, and endure the other, we shall have inward repose.

Still, I willingly admit, nothing has so great a tendency in the common course of things, to exalt a nation as universal justice, benevolence, temper-

rance, and piety. Whenever the practice of these virtues becomes general, public prosperity and the success of good individuals will be combined by the same course of events, but while vices of a contrary description prevail they who would preserve their innocence must arm their minds to expect disappointments and vexations, a conflict and not a crown. But if their hearts are right with God, these evils will be infinitely counterpoised by a calm serenity of mind, arising from a victory over irregular desires, a patient dependance on unerring wisdom, a happy consciousness of acting as they ought, and such a moderate estimation of this world as renders them, at once thankful for its blessings, and unenraptured by its enjoyments. And the certainty of that event which poisons all the pleasures of vice and luxury, administers ineffable consolation to these

who consider the present state of things as probationary not retributive.

It is not with a view to diminish the incentives to a life of virtue, but to place them on a steadfast basis, that I wish to discourage the habit of teaching youth, that there is an absolute connection between goodness and success, while their future experience must shew it to be uncertain and precarious. And even granting that the temporal rewards of virtue were less arbitrary, by instructing the opening mind to expect them, do we not inculcate that vice of selfishness which is so opposite to the Christian temper, and so subversive of public spirit, on which the safety of our empire, humanly speaking, depends? The rising generation will probably be called to the most strenuous exertions, the most severe sacrifices. Let them therefore be taught to look for happiness in the inward consciousness of

acting as they ought. Prosperity may be the portion of true worth, or it may not, just as suits the grand designs of Providence, or its own spiritual advantage, but the riches of a contented well regulated mind are its certain portion.

It is therefore, from closely attending to the course of events, as well as for a moral purpose, that I avoid bringing down any immediate and extraordinary visitations on the head of Paulina, who, but for the traces which her violent passions and guilty conscience made on her countenance, (and which were too deep for art to disguise) long preserved the exterior of a happy woman. It is true she had an accountable repugnance to being alone, and unless immersed in a variety, as well as quick succession, of pleasures, was subject to what she called low spirits; but as stratagem

and apparent self-control, combined with an inordinate pursuit of every indulgence, did not leave the conscious murderess, she contrived to keep up a sort of second rate respectability. Her equipage was the most splendid, her house the most magnificent, her parties the most crowded, her jewels the most brilliant, and her establishment and engagements attended with most eclat. I think no one who considers affluence and popularity as the criteria of desert, can doubt her being the happiest as well as the worthiest woman in England. Indeed she had an equal right to both these appellations.

Mr. Villars was convinced by the noble behaviour of Lord Avondel, and some dreadful pangs of remorse which even the practised Paulina could not conceal, when gratified revenge yielded to vain affection, that the noble Earl

had lost his life from a false accusation. He took the earliest opportunity of following General Monthermer to Hamburgh, and he found him labouring under the consciousness of having basely deprived a fellow creature of life, a reflection most agonizing to an honest but impetuous character. His apprehensions that the guilt of the victim of his fury had not been so great as to justify him in the public opinion, were changed into most insupportable anguish by Villars's account of Avondel's magnanimous silence as to the cause of his death, and his endeavours to impress on the minds of those about him that Monthermer had taken no unfair advantages. Paulina's determination to remain in England, and revel in the luxuries her wealth commanded, rather than accompany him in his exile, though he offered to fix with her in that Italy

for which she affected to sigh, convinced him that she was reconciled to England by the circumstance of its being the only land on which he could not set his foot. Villars too, though unwilling to render his unhappy master more miserable, was induced by his native ingenuousness to confess, that he believed Paulina was afflicted by the event of the duel, and that if she ever loved any one, it was him she had sacrificed to the demons of revenge and jealousy. A remembrance of the unbounded love and confidence which he had wasted on so ungrateful and unworthy a woman, a recollection of the dreadful consequences his rash hand had occasioned, and a conviction that he was forever banished from that beloved country to whose shores he had looked in all his former enterprizes and dangers as the asylum of his age,

sank him into the depth of despair. In one moment he had done England a greater injury than all the labours of his active life could atone. And at whose instigation? Uxorious fondness changed into deadly hate. A profound and cherished melancholy, which society could not illumine, nor change of place alleviate, soon unsettled his reason, and eluding the vigilance of Villars he fell by his own hand, stimulated, as he said, to the dreadful deed by his constant attendant the vindictive shade of Avondel.

Lady Paulina Monthermer received the news of the general's death with the affectation of fortitude, and after devoting something less than the usual time to the loneliness and regret of widowhood, she returned to the world the bride of Lord Norbury. As what was called a tender friendship had been known to subsist between these con-

genial souls, their marriage only surprised those who thought the noble pair wished for no closer tie. But they did not consider that Hymen has other ministers beside chaste affection. Lord Norbury's wasted fortune required the reparation of Paulina's patrimonial lands and ample dower, and her reputation required to be new gilt by marriage, as the brazen effrontery of the courtesan had become so apparent, that even the meanest of the summer flies who buzzed round her greatness could only hope that so agreeable and hospitable a lady did not do any thing very wrong.

No omens of peace, happiness, or honour, gilded these nuptials. The guilty pair were only bound together to enable them to spring with more elastic vigour to their opposite pursuits. Paulina beheld her fortune wasted at the gaming-table, and Nor-

bury was perplexed to determine, which of the numerous violaters of his bed he should select as the victim of his revenge; or, rather, he felt deterred from prosecuting any individual by a conviction, that the laws of England would not permit him to complain of injury, since no man of the least delicacy would have selected a woman who had forfeited all pretensions to character, as the guardian of his honour. Thus they lived in real wretchedness and apparent splendour: the lot of many criminals, to whom inexperience looks with envy, and murmurs at the humble comforts of innocence.

Seven annual suns had passed over the magnificent monument which marked where Avondel's dust reposed, and recorded his lineage and actions, when the marchioness of Glenvorne received the following letter from her

friend, Lady Selina Delamore, with which I shall conclude this history.

“To the Marchioness of Glenvorne.

“It gives me infinite satisfaction to hear, that your worthy son has at length relinquished that cherished attachment which his delicacy has long concealed. I know the lady he now addresses, and I know her high deserts. She possesses those recommendations, which my dear dejected niece must ever have wanted. Her heart has never been devoted to another, nor has sorrow and regret weakened her health and spirits. She will bestow her undivided affection on her husband, and cheerfully enter with him on the duties of life as his assistant and comfort.

“No excellence, however conspicuous, could have withdrawn Emily's affection from the grave of her lord,

and had I (moved by your intreaties) urged her to reward Lord Glenvorne's generous affection, she would have passed her days in a painful conflict between her attachment to the dead and her duty to the living, continually reproaching herself with her inability of returning his tenderness, and making him wretched by her ill-concealed efforts to seem happy. She feels it to be her only consolation to devote herself in the prime of womanhood to her first love. Who shall controvert this oblation of fidelity? Her heart is consecrated to what she deemed the compendium of magnanimity and desert. Who shall dispel this innocent, and perhaps commendable, because consolatory, enthusiasm? As the widow of Lord Avondel, she believes herself an object of peculiar veneration and regard. It is not every woman who is capable of constancy, and in a dispo-

sition gentle and timid as Emily's, such indelible impressions are not common. Yet love and grief, like religion, have their sincere martyrs, and when sorrow neither murmurs nor allows itself to rest in an indolent renunciation of positive duties, firmer minds should pity and support the depression of real sensibility. 'Tis useless and cruel to irritate gentleness by reproof, or to oppress infirmity, sinking under the pressure of calamity, by requiring from it exertions to which it is unequal.

"Our young Avondel is a lively interesting boy. He resembles his father. Ah! that father, Lady Glen-vorne, who that recollects him in the zenith of his renown can hope to see his equal? Our humbler views are confined to the wish of seeing his dear child resemble him in the milder features of his character. 'Splendid parts

and vast acquirements, various, rich, profound,' are the lot of few, and are oftener public than private blessings.

"Your account of Lady Caddy is indeed diverting. I remember when she was thought unequal to the fabrication of a rebus, and she is now you say a professor and patroness of the most recondite branches of learning. You justly observe her school of philosophy was the world, and being endowed by nature with a good memory and volubility of language, she has picked up the opinions and new decorated the remarks, of others, till the neglected wit and wisdom of her acquaintance has furnished her with a well-looking wardrobe, on which the reflected light of affluence casts commanding splendour. Situation has a most powerful effect on mental as well as on natural objects, and what on a mountain looks like a fortress is mere-

ly a sheep-cote if placed in a valley. Yet, as Lady Caddy was not always thus conspicuous, I suspect the remembrance of her early mortifications, when she attempted the character of a *bas-bleu* in less favourable circumstances, must abate the zest of her present enjoyments. The inebriety which vanity occasions sometimes subsides, and then appear those mitigations of satisfaction which ridiculous pursuits are sure to create. Lady Caddy goes to sleep and dreams of chaplets and trophies, and she awakes to stimulate the ingenuity of her cook and maitre d'hotel, whom she is forced to admit as adjuncts to her literary renown.

“ I am interrupted by receiving an account of Lady Norbury's death. Unhappy woman ! she had leisure allowed her for repentance, but this, like

all the other mercies of heaven, was misapplied.

“When I consider what this woman was, and what she was designed to be, I bitterly lament the striking degradation which vice brings upon the intellect, as well as on the moral value, of those who submit to its tyranny. If ever (though she abandoned herself from her early youth to excessive self-love, inordinate vanity, and all the turmoil of unrestrained passions) Paulina could so well counterfeit the sublime expressions of real greatness and genuine honour, how must she have instructed and delighted the world, had that holy flame been really kindled in her heart which would have given vital energy to her personifications? Her life has been counted happy! I pity her even in her days of comparative innocence and unruffled prosperity.

“You tell me, when you first knew her at Florence she was the same character. She has then always been a slave to tyrannical inclinations, and ever acting in contradiction to the suggestions of her own enlightened mind. Her correct taste in literature and science, must have originally resulted from moral feelings equally strong and pure, and those acute perceptions of whatever was sublime or beautiful, great or good, which accompany genius, were intended as preservatives from evil, not lures to sin. Her habits and feelings, therefore, were at perpetual war, and whenever she commended what was really noble and generous she indirectly censured the baseness and littleness of her own pursuits. For even the miser is not so narrow-minded as the voluptuary. The former only aims to engross

wealth, but there is not a species of enjoyment which the latter does not endeavour to obtain, or which they do not grudge when possessed by another. How salutary to such would be the wholesome exercise of self-denial, which would teach them, that happiness does not consist in accumulating whatever a vitiated fancy suggests as desirable, but in retaining a lively relish of the pure peaceful pleasures, which are lawfully our own, and in forbearing to desire those which cannot be obtained without the forfeiture of innocence.

“ And here, my valuable friend, let me expatiate on the advantages of affliction. Whoever has properly passed through its purifying ordeal will look with candour and pity, instead of envy, on those bewildered beings, who have ever walked in those paths

from whence we are assured it is most difficult to find the road to eternal rest. It is, indeed, hard for those who enjoy prosperity, though theoretically convinced of its uncertainty, to avoid practically trusting in it, and thus to fail of devoting a due share of attention to a better world. And the livelier our satisfaction in terrene enjoyments the more necessary it is to have it abated by some occasional rebukes of sorrow. For myself, I can truly say, I would not exchange the temper of mind which my early calamities inspired to be at this moment the beloved and happy wife of him who deserved and possessed my heart. My principles and my attachment would have prevented my becoming a Paulina, but I am persuaded I should have been so intoxicated with the present, as in heart and intention to

have pitched my tent in an earthly paradise, and I could never so far have abstracted my thoughts from my goodly heritage as to consider the origin, design, and end of my being. Death, which corrodes the enjoyments of the happy, has to me long worn a smiling aspect. I know not how long I shall be required to act and to suffer. I feel that I am in a strange land, and I know I have another country to which in my estimation this world acts like a long avenue leading to some magnificent palace. My path is alternately rugged and smooth, it goes over flowery valleys and dangerous quagmires. I pass under the palm and the cypress : I am sometimes shaded by evergreens, and anon the winter's wind howls through trees stripped of their leafy honours. But there is one advantage in my road, my attention is diverted

from other objects, and fixed on the glorious turrets which will terminate my pilgrimage."

"SELINA DELAMORE."



FINIS.



